The ... Red-headed ... Kids

A. M. Chisholm

Mrs Al Hubbard

E 604 - 4 Ave

Spokane

Wn

To Bill

from

"The Firsties"

THE RED-HEADED KIDS

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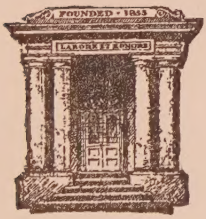
The Red-headed Kids

An Adventure Story

BY

A. M. Chisholm



CHELSEA HOUSE

79 Seventh Avenue New York City

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The Red-headed Kids

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THE RED-HEADED KIDS

CHAPTER I

A DOCTOR'S PRESCRIPTION

THE kid was red-headed, skinny, and eighteen years old, the only son, though not the only child, of a fairly successful lawyer in a town which depended mainly on the lumber industry for its being. His name was Archibald Ogilvie. He was suspected of a tubercular taint, principally because a paternal great-aunt had succumbed to the white plague some years before he was born. Hence, from his arrival in this world, things were ordered to delay as long as possible his departure for the next.

As a baby he spent most days, winter and summer, out of doors; and as a child he passed his nights on a sleeping porch, in an era which regarded night air as poisonous and sleeping outside walls as a form of self-destruction. As he grew to boyhood he was encouraged to cultivate tastes which would keep him in the open air. His summers were spent out of town, at a cottage upon the shores of a lake. He never remembered when he learned to swim, and he could make a canoe eat out of his hand. At the age of ten he graduated from a slung shot to a small rifle. In the winter he skated and snowshoed, and though he remained as skinny as ever, he grew wiry, with a store of endurance and reserve strength.

Young Ogilvie did not greatly care for the ordinary games of boyhood. He played them perfunctorily, but they failed to charm, to absorb as did the other things. Perhaps because of his liking for amusements in which companions were not essential and were at times even a nuisance, he had no close

friends. He grew to be sufficient unto himself, to rely on himself for occupation and amusement, and to work out his own problems alone.

But in spite of this open-air regimen he developed a cough in the spring of his eighteenth year. It was a modest, little bronchial cough, but it hung on through the summer. The kid himself paid no attention to it; but to his parents it was a warning, notice that a sap had been driven beneath their careful system of defense against the hereditary enemy.

"But I tell you," the family medicine man, who was also an old friend, asseverated, "the kid's lungs are as sound as mine. Sounder. This cough is bronchial, and its hanging on a mere matter of habit. It's no more an indication of T. B. than a sneeze is of a cold. Most sneezes are caused by tickling. So's this."

"Maybe," the kid's father admitted doubtfully. "But his great-aunt——"

"Great-aunt—blazes!" snorted the man of medicine. "All *your* great-aunts are dead, aren't they? And you're alive. Well, then!"

"But you see, Bill——"

"It may be too much to expect sense from a lawyer," his friend interrupted, "but you're a monomaniac, and you make me tired. First thing you know you'll get the kid thinking he's got it. Best thing you can do is to lose sight of him for a while. Send him up to some logging camp for the winter. That's good treatment for any bronchial trouble."

"That's a mighty good idea," the father admitted. "It's so good that I wonder how you thought of it."

"You get out of my office," his friend returned indignantly. "What you really need is an alienist."

Archibald's father grinned and betook himself to one Peter McLachlin, a client and the owner of several good pineries, to whom he explained his desire. McLachlin consulted an oracle in the form of "Sandy" McPhail, his office factotum, with the re-

sult that the kid's temporary destiny was settled in McLachlin's smallest camp on the St. Pierre. "He can keep time, and handle the pay roll and the van," McLachlin said. "Won't be much work. Send him around and Sandy'll show him the ropes."

This was in late September. Two weeks later the kid boarded a mixed local, having with him his cough, a .30-.30 magazine rifle, and a .32 caliber six-shot defective which, in most ways, including kick, bore about the same relation to a real gun that present-day authorized beverages bear to those of our benighted but contented forefathers. But with the optimism of youth the kid regarded this nickel-plated cootie as a lethal weapon.

Being garbed as he considered appropriately for the shanties, the kid eschewed the rear coach and entered the smoker, where, to mark his freedom from regulations which had hitherto encompassed him, he filled a brand-new pipe and lit it. It might be bad for his cough, but it stamped him as a man, off for the shanties. Also he enjoyed tobacco. He put his feet on the seat in front of him and smoked grandly, waiting for the train to start.

The cryptic howl of the conductor echoed from the platform and the first shuddering jerk and grind ran through the trucks. As the train gained motion the kid, looking out of the window, beheld a file of men, variously burdened with blanket rolls and canvas bags, running swiftly if somewhat unsteadily down the platform. They swarmed onto the train like a pirate boarding crew, and a moment later erupted upon the comparative quiet of the smoker, filling it with an aroma of liquor and an aura of profanity—the burden of the latter being that the qualified adjective train had pulled out ahead of time, whereby one of their number, a gentleman known as Mike Callahan, had been damnified as to his exchequer in manner following:

"F'r th' drinks," Mr. Callahan complained loudly to the world at large from the seat in front of the

kid. "I t'run a ten-spot on the bar. Ye seen me t'run it. 'Give the b'ys a drink,' I says, 'an' gimme a bottle of good rye in case of train sickness which I'm subject to, an' me change.' An' he rakes in me ten, an' just then somebody hollers that the train's startin', an' ye all grab f'r yer turkeys. 'Niver mind thim drinks,' I says to him, 'but shoot me a bottle an' me change.' 'In a minit,' says he, fiddlin' around back of th' bar. 'Quick, man,' I says, ye bein' all gone, 'or I'll miss the train.' 'I can't make change onless ye take two bottles,' he says. 'Gimme thim,' says I, fair dancin'. 'Here y'are,' says he, shovin' two bottles wrapped up in paper at me, an' a bill wid thim. 'Hustle, lad, or ye'll not make it!' So I grabs an' runs. An' here," Mr. Callahan concluded bitterly, "is what I get for me ten—two bottles of beer wort' fifty cints, an' a wan-dollar bill. He stung me, th'——" And Mr. Callahan's following flight of hyberbole showed the technique of a master of personal description.

Their grievance at the alleged early departure of the train was vented upon the conductor. Mr. Callahan could not find his transportation. In lieu thereof he repeated his pathetic tale.

"I had me tickut," he declared, "I had it in me pocket. An' belike I lost it runnin' f'r to catch the train. What license have ye to pull out ahead of time, defraudin' th' travelin' public, tell me that?"

"That dump across the street from the station keeps a slow clock on purpose to make you shanty lads miss trains and short-change you," the conductor returned. "Ticket or fare!"

"Th' tickut was bought an' paid for," Mr. Callahan argued, "so they's nawthin' more comin' to yer dom railway from me."

"Come on, now," said the conductor, "I haven't got time to talk."

"Ye'd like th' fare," Mr. Callahan opined, "f'r to knock it down. Divil th' cent wud the company see. I know th' tricks of yez, more be token I have

a cousin brakin'. He says th' cons on this line is too crooked to split wid th' train hands."

"You'll come through with a ticket or fare, or I'll put you off at the next stop," was the conductor's ultimatum.

"Put me off!" Mr. Callahan bellowed truculently. "Try it, ye brass-buttoned, lanthern-wavin', fare-pouchin' son iv a crucified thief an' a scarlet she-mule——"

But at this point the kid chanced to observe the corner of a piece of pasteboard protruding from the bottom edge of Mr. Callahan's hat. Leaning forward he touched him on the shoulder. "Maybe your ticket's in your hat," he suggested.

Mr. Callahan removed his headgear which he had been wearing negligently front to rear, and found the missing transportation. He tendered it to the conductor, wagging an accusatory finger.

"Ye seen ut!" he announced in tones of shocked virtue; "all the time ye seen ut. Yer eyes was on ut while ye was tryin' to hold me up f'r an' extry fare. 'Tis not enough f'r ye to knock down in th' ord'nary way. Take shame f'r yerself an' blush! I'm a good notion f'r to write the company——"

But the conductor was too old a bird to engage in an altercation with a drunken lumberjack. Though he would have liked to punch Mr. Callahan, he merely punched his ticket and passed on. Mr. Callahan turned and surveyed the kid.

"Ye done me a good turn," he announced, "sp'ilin' th' graft iv that t'ief of th' wurruld. Have a dhrink wid me, lad! Pass down th' bottle this way, Crowley!"

"I don't care for any, thanks," young Ogilvie told him.

"Belike ye're not ould enough f'r whisky," Mr. Callahan speculated. "How about a dhrop of beer? It lies cowld on a man's stummick, but b'y's stummicks is stronger nor men's. Will ye?"

"I guess not," the kid decided. "I don't like the taste."

"Ye'll mend of that," Mr. Callahan predicted encouragingly. "They was a time when I didn't, meself, but I had th' will power to keep at it. Ye'll never learn younger."

But the kid refused, grinning amiably. He had neither temperance convictions nor training. In his father's house there had always been liquor; but he had never seen his father or his father's friends at all affected by it, and he had never been told not to drink. Hence there was none of the temptation of forbidden fruit. As it is only in temperance fiction that men insist on boys drinking, Mr. Callahan did not urge him further.

"Where are ye goin' to?" he asked, running an experienced eye over the kid's equipment. When he was told, his face expressed surprise. "That's where me an' some more of the lads is for," he announced. "Are ye hired, or just lookin' f'r a job?"

"Hired."

"Who hired ye?"

"Mr. McLachlin."

"Ould Pether!" Mr. Callahan exclaimed in surprise tinged with suspicion. "What to do?"

"Whatever I can," the kid replied, not relishing this questioning.

"That'll be chorin' round th' camp," Mr. Callahan decided, and as a chore boy was really beneath the notice of a seasoned logger he turned back to his mates and the consumption of the available liquid supply, which eventually included even the despised beer.

In the dusk of a fall evening the train reached the kid's point of debarkation, a village rejoicing in the name of Corktown, but whether in honor of ancient Cork or because of the calks or "corks" which studded the driving shoes of the rivermen who occasionally took it to pieces, was doubtful. In any event Corktown bore a hard name, as did the single

hotel which also bore the scars of years of transient, temperamental guests.

A room was not to be had, but the kid obtained the right to sleep in the "bull pen," a bare, cot-strewn dormitory on the upper floor. He had been told that a tote team would be in from the camp, which was some thirty miles distant; but it had not arrived and nobody knew anything about it. It might come next day or next week. This information, or lack of it, Mr. Callahan and his friends received with curses. They would have to walk, packing their "turkeys." On the theory that they would get plenty of walking later, they proceeded to get into a condition which precluded that method of locomotion.

The kid partook sparingly of a supper remarkable for its variety of pie and profligacy of grease, and subsequently established himself in an obscure corner, where he bit his tongue with his new pipe and watched the kaleidoscopic play of a masculine life which, though not altogether new to him, was a trifle awe-inspiring.

He had seen logging camps, as a visitor, and he had seen shantymen, but he had never been thrown among them as now. The bar was crowded with them. The air was fogged with smoke, heavy with the aroma of liquor and oil-tanned footgear. The pine walls echoed with loud voices, gusts of deep-chested laughter, and crackling blasphemies used as casually and meaninglessly as current slang.

As the evening wore on there was singing, a fiddle and an accordion came from somewhere, and there was dancing. Occasionally there were disputes, high argument, but no fighting. The crowd was good-natured, having its last fling before facing months of sober monotony and hard work in the bitter cold and deep snows of the pineries.

A roar of applause and the patter of feet slapping time to the notes of the fiddle brought the kid to the door of the bar. A man was dancing alone. His

face was deeply tanned, almost swarthy, and, after a fashion, handsome, but truculent in expression. Standing at least six feet in height, he tapered from shoulders to feet, the latter being extremely small for his size, and incased in gorgeous, golden-dyed, quill-embroidered moccasins. His dancing was graceful, with an infinite variety of steps, and he varied it with acrobatics. He leaped high and cracked his heels together half a dozen times in the air; threw himself forward and danced upon his hands, coming to his feet with a handspring; and his conclusion was a marvelous leap and high kick in which both his moccasins touched the ceiling. He alighted like a cat, on the balls of his feet, rebounded, and swaggered toward the bar with an assumed indifference to the applause.

"Who's that?" the kid asked Mr. Callahan, who was leaning against the wall in a somewhat blurred not to say foggy condition, in which he suffered from the involuntary spasmodic contraction of the glottis known as hiccups.

"Yip!" Mr. Callahan replied. "He's Jim Flynn, no—yip!—less."

"Is that so," said the kid apologetically, feeling that he should have known this celebrity of whom he had never heard. "He's clever with his feet."

"Hic!" said Mr. Callahan. "There's few things he can't do wid th' feet of him, on dry land or wet logs."

"A riverman?" the kid queried.

"Hup!" said Mr. Callahan. "Have ye never heard tell of him?"

"Tell me about him," said the kid.

"Not here," said Mr. Callahan wearily. "I will sit me down a whiles. Me feet is tired standin', an' a long day to-morry, an' I'm overtuk wid a giddiness from th' grease of th' supper I et, an' th' heat of th' room. Hup!"

The kid piloted the weary Mr. Callahan to a seat and repeated his query.

"He's a divil," Mr. Callahan replied cautiously, in an alcoholic whisper. "Did yez take notice till th' feet of him?"

"Small," the kid nodded, "like a girl's."

"Be ashamed, noticin' gyurls' feet at your age!" Mr. Callahan reproved him virtuously. "But he wears a number five boot—an' him six fut wan in his moccasins. Niver trust a big man wid a little fut."

"Why not?" the kid queried.

"It's th' sign of th' divil," Mr. Callahan explained. "Did yez never hear tell of how th' blessid angels wanst catched Ould Nick, an' chained him by wan leg, an' he dhrawed his fut through th' fetthers be reason of th' smallness of it, an' won free? 'Neither fetthers nor chains will hould me!' he grins. But, as he makes off, th' Grand Angel Michael takes a swipe at him wid an ax, an' splits his fut wide open like a cotter pin. 'Next time we catch ye,' Michael hollers afther him as he disappears howlin' in a blaze of red fire an' a smell of sulphur that set all th' blessid angels coughin' their heads off, 'there's wan fut ye won't dhraw through th' darbies. Get to blazes out of here wid ye!' he says. That's the true story of th' cloven hoof ye see in th' pitchers of th' Ould Boy. An' to this day th' small fut on th' big man is th' divil's mark."

"Is that all that's wrong with Flynn—his feet?" the kid grinned.

"An' enough, too," Mr. Callahan growled. "Wid thim little feet he killed a man—crackin' his neck wid a kick."

"Then why isn't he in jail?"

"The shanties an' th' river is a long ways from jail," Mr. Callahan replied. "God hates an informer, an', annyways, it was done in a fight. If that was all—— But he holds th' black grudge. He's a hard man. Keep clear of him." And Mr. Callahan evinced a desire for slumber.

"What do you mean by 'the black grudge?'"

"'Tis said he thripped wan man in th' face of a breakin' jam an' sent him to his death."

"Gosh!" the kid breathed.

"Afther all, th' felly was a Frenchman," said Mr. Callahan tolerantly. "They's other things—but I will not soil me tongue an' th' ears of youth an' innocency by repeatin' such." And this time Mr. Callahan called it a day, and slept in his chair.

CHAPTER II

THE OTHER KID

IN the gray of dawn Archibald awoke to the sound of steady rain on the roof. A running fire of sleepy curses from other bunks furnished a sufficient commentary. The men were not inclined to start on a thirty-mile hike in such weather. The majority of them slept again.

The kid arose, ate breakfast, and stared forlornly into a gray world laced with rain. He was not exactly homesick, but he was lonely and bored. There was no one with whom he could converse on a footing of equality. The men ignored him. Mr. Callahan, rolled blissfully in his blankets, still slept the sleep of the just.

In the afternoon the rain ceased and the kid wandered forth. The village consisted of one main street, indicated by a sidewalk pitted and slivered with the spiked boots of rivermen, and a scattering residential section. In ten minutes he had exhausted its sight-seeing possibilities. But water, and especially running water, for him held a peculiar charm. He turned to the river as to a friend. Leaving the village behind he followed a trail upstream.

Half an hour later he arrived at a succession of deep holes and eddies. Rounding a rocky angle he came upon a lone fisherman. The fisherman's back was toward him. A loose raincoat reached to the boot tops and a shapeless felt hat covered the head. As the kid looked he saw a thirty-foot cast which settled exactly in the center of a calm patch of water. The water broke with a swirl, the line went taut, the rod's tip bent down. Being versed in sportsman's etiquette the kid remained where he was until the fish was neatly landed. At the sound

of his footsteps the fisherman turned, and to the kid's surprise he beheld a girl.

She was perhaps two years younger than he. Her figure, so far as could be seen beneath the loose raincoat, was straight, angular, boyish. Her face was freckled, her mouth somewhat large and straight, her eyes clear and blue with a singularly level and direct quality of gaze, and her hair a brilliant red. She was no beauty, but to the kid's eyes she looked like a good sport, and she certainly knew how to handle a rod.

"Hallo!" she greeted, nodding.

"Hallo!" the kid responded. "That's a nice fish."

"I get 'em bigger than that." Her eyes appraised him frankly. "Like to try a cast?"

"I'd rather watch you." But she handed him the rod. His first and second casts were poor. His third was better and he got a strike. He landed his fish and handed the rod back. "You're better than I am," he admitted. "I'll just watch you, if you don't mind."

At the end of an hour she had a dozen. She reeled in and unjointed her rod.

"I've all I want, and it's getting late. Going back?"

"Yes, I've nothing else to do."

They took the homeward trail, chatting on the way. In the easy confidences of youth he learned that his companion's name was Noreen Maguire. Her father, once a logging boss, was now a cripple, the result of an accident with rolling logs. In his time he had been known as the "Big Rust," on account of his size and the color of his hair. It was evident that his daughter was tremendously proud of him. In return the kid explained his circumstances.

"You come and have supper with us to-night," his new acquaintance invited, "and we'll have these fish."

"Thanks," the kid accepted practically. "The grub at the hotel's rotten."

"Mine isn't," said his prospective hostess. "I can cook."

"I'll bet you can," the kid concurred. "Do you do your own cooking?"

"I have to. Kitty won't. She's my sister—older'n I am."

"I should think she'd help you, anyway."

"Oh, she's no darn use to work," Noreen said candidly. "I can do more when she keeps out of the way. About all she thinks of is fellows, and having a good time."

"Fellows, huh!" said the kid, with some contempt. He had elder sisters of his own.

"Make me tired, too," said Noreen. "She's always rubbing it into me that I'm too young to like boys. But I *do* like boys. I like 'em better'n girls —that is when they don't want to maul you around and kiss you when you go for a walk after dark."

"Is that what they do?" the kid asked.

"You know darn well it is," she told him with extreme candor. The kid blushed.

"I know some fellows are like that," he admitted, "but lots aren't."

"Do you mean you aren't?"

"Yes. I mean no, I'm not."

"Didn't you ever kiss a girl?"

The kid blushed at the memory of a bitter humiliation.

"Well—I had to see a girl home from a shine one night. She—she dared me to kiss her. It was in front of Bill Sanders' house, and Bill and his bunch jumped up from behind the fence and gave me the laugh. It was a put-up job—darn her!" Beneath his breath the kid added a stronger condemnatory phrase. Noreen sympathized.

"Rotten trick. What did you do?"

"Couldn't do anything then. I punched the head off Bill Sanders next day."

"That would help some," she agreed; "but that girl ought to have got hers, too. That's our house, up there."

It stood on a gentle slope half concealed by trees, relics of the ancient forest, a solid structure of squared timbers, hewed and fitted to a nicety.

"Dad hewed the logs himself," Noreen informed him with pride. "You'd think they were planed. They say he was a wonder with a broad ax when he was a young man. Come along in. You can talk to him while I get supper. He likes boys—but he doesn't like some of the fellows Kitty has."

The living room into which the kid was ushered was spacious and solidly furnished. A wood fire burned in a bricked fireplace. Before it, in an easy-chair with crutches beside him, sat the wreck of what had once been a mighty man, Dan Maguire, the Big Rust.

Inactivity had bowed Maguire's shoulders and overlaid his great muscles with fat, but had not dimmed his blue eyes or quenched the spirit that looked out through them upon a world pitiably restricted for one who, from his youth, had roved the forests and lakes and rivers of a thousand miles of northland. He took the kid's slim, freckled hand in a great paw, hairy as that of a red bear, and made him welcome while Noreen disappeared toward the kitchen. The sister, Kitty, was not in evidence.

"And so ye'll be goin' to the shanties," said Maguire. "Forty-odd years agone I was off for the shanties for the first time meself." He sighed, his hard, blue eyes on the fire.

"That's a long time ago," said the kid, for lack of better comment.

"'Tis so. Ten dollars a month and grub was the pay then, and the grub was mighty plain. No sugar, no dried fruit or the likes—none of what the lack of now for wan day would make a whole camp ask for its time. But, after all, them was the days! Hard work and hard men! By th' mortal, but we

gloried in our hardness! An' pine such as no man will ever see again—to say nawthin' of oak. An' we cut it, an' squared it, an' rafted it down th' Grand River an' on to tidewater. An' all along was crews doin' likewise; an' th' rivers chokin' wid logs an' rafts; an' hundreds of shanty lads in the towns along, lookin' for diversion, an' findin' it."

"I'll bet you've seen some great times," the kid commented enviously.

"Ye would win," said the Big Rust, a spark of the long-banked fires of those bygone, glorious days lighting in his eyes. "Never was there such men in God's world before or since as the shanty lads of them days. Dozens of times I have seen men take a hundred-to-wan chance of death for nawthin' but just plain hellery, and to show they weren't afeared. I have seen a hundred men fight three hundred wid fists, feet, an' peavies a night an' a day, the length of a town—me bein' wan of the hundred.

"I have seen two men, each wid fifty pounds of loggin' chain wrapped around him, bindin' his arms to his sides, step out on a stick of pine in fifty fut of water to settle a grudge by a birlin' match—an' th' man that was birled laughed as he hit the water an' th' chain took him down to th' bottom to wait for judgment day. I have seen loggin' wars, an' men ground to a red froth on th' water in log jams, an' men that died cheerful for a friend. Ah, well, every dog has his day, till at last he's ould an' drowses by th' fire, an' blinks at th' pups playin' about him."

The kid murmured incoherently. Though too young to vibrate to the deep melancholy of the older man, he felt something of the common human tragedy of age, and was sorry for Maguire, a sheer hulk before his time. But he had no words to express his sympathy. Maguire suddenly came out of the memories of those stirring days.

"All in a lifetime," he said lightly. "There's fun in the world for man and boy, an' always will be.

Take it as ye go along, lad, an' put nawthin' off—neither work nor play. I mind they was a funny thing happened wanst——"

He told the story, and the kid enjoyed it. They were on excellent terms when Noreen appeared. Supper was ready, but Kitty Maguire had not come in.

"She knows the hours of meals," said Maguire. "We'll eat."

They were in the midst of the meal when the belated daughter entered. Though he was not especially appreciative of feminine good looks, the kid acknowledged to himself that she was pretty. Noreen's hair was red, but hers was bronze-gold; her mouth was a Cupid's bow, her eyes an appealing, soft blue. But in spite of her prettiness—or because of it—she gave an impression of uncertainty, of futility. To himself the kid classed her as a fluff. As she entered her color was high and her breath a trifle short.

"Am I late?" she exclaimed, and stopped short as she saw the visitor.

"Ye've been runnin'," said her father dryly, "so like enough the time is no news to ye. Supper's at six, and not at half past."

"I know; but I was with some girls."

For a moment Noreen looked at her sister, a wise, cynical smile creeping about her mouth. Somehow the kid divined that Kitty Maguire had lied—gratuitously.

"Sit down and eat," said Maguire. "This lad is a friend of Noreen's."

The blue eyes regarded the kid and his youth with tolerant contempt. An amused smile, partly malicious, bent the Cupid's bow.

"Noreen's coming on—bringing her young men home!"

The kid blushed and Noreen's eyes snapped. But Maguire spoke:

"Noreen's young men is them she *can* bring home."

The innuendo was obvious. Kitty Maguire's face flushed scarlet, but she did not retort. A heavy silence settled. The kid essayed to relieve the awkwardness of the situation.

"Say, Mr. Maguire, there's a man at the hotel I've been hearing some yarns about—Jim Flynn. Do you know him?"

The effect of this innocent speech was surprising. Kitty Maguire shot him a glance absolutely venomous. Maguire uttered a sound like a fierce growl of an angry dog. He turned on his daughter.

"So ye were wid some of the gyurls, were ye? Flynn is in town again, is he? Ye little liar! Ye were wid him—after what I told ye!"

"Suppose I was!" the girl returned defiantly.

"I forbid ye to go wid him. I will not have the name of a daughter of mine light in the mouths of the young men on the street corners and on the tongues of th' ould women clackin' around their teapots."

"I've done nothing to be talked about. I can look after myself."

"Can ye so?" said her father bitterly. "Ye might if ye were not a vain, little fool. But Flynn is no man for a dacint gyurl to be seen wid, an' th' gyurl that goes wid him is judged by him. Keep on, an' th' time will not be long till women ye've knowed all yer life will pass ye wid a nod or not so much, an' their houses will be closed to ye, though ye may be innocent as a babe. I've seen the likes happen before, and it will happen to no gyurl of mine if I can stop it. If I had th' use of me legs, ould as I am, I would seek out this Flynn."

Kitty Maguire laughed scornfully. "Maybe it's lucky for you that you haven't."

"Twenty and thirty years ago," her father returned grimly, "there was men as good as Flynn—maybe better—and no man of them I could not

look bechune the eyes. I cannot go to him, but I will have him come to me—if he is a man at all. The lad here will take the word to him this night. Will ye, b'y?"

"If you want me to," the kid consented uncomfortably.

Kitty Maguire was plainly frightened. "You don't mean that, father!"

"Aye, but I do mean it. Ye have been traipsin' wid a man that is no man for a good gyurl to go wid, an' will not take warnin'. If he wants to marry you and you want to marry him, knowin' what he is, I'll say no word. But if he is not thinkin' of marryin' and ye will not let him alone, he shall let ye alone, or I will know why."

"You mean you are going to ask him if he is going to marry me?" The girl's face flamed.

"Just that."

"I won't be shamed to any man. I'll promise—I'll promise anything."

"Ye promise too easy," said Maguire, shaking his head, "just as ye lie too easy. Shame, says you! It's not a patch on the shame ye'll live under, whether ye deserve it or not, unless I check ye. So that's settled. After supper the lad will go."

"It's not fair to let him take the word to Flynn," Noreen put in. "Flynn might be blaming him for it. I'll go with him and tell Flynn myself."

"That's maybe best," Maguire agreed after a moment's reflection. "He's a dirty dog, is Flynn, by all tell."

The kid's supper was completely spoiled. He felt uncomfortable, nervous, not so much on account of his promised errand, but as an outsider who has intruded upon intimate family affairs He cursed himself for his innocent mention of Flynn's name.

The meal was concluded in heavy silence. Immediately after, Kitty Maguire disappeared. Maguire filled his pipe and smoked, staring at the fire. Noreen, nodding to the kid, got her hat and coat.

"I'm sorry I got you into this," she said when they were outside.

"You didn't. It was my fault, speaking of Flynn. Of course, I didn't know anything about him and your sister."

"I know. Kitty's a darn fool. She doesn't mean any harm, and she only thinks she's stuck on Flynn. She hasn't sense enough to be really fond of anybody."

Young Ogilvie considered this frank, sisterly statement. "I thought your father was a little hard on her."

"Oh, I don't know. This is a rotten place for talk. A girl has to be pretty careful." She turned a quizzical eye on him. "I suppose you think it's awful of me talking about such things to a boy?"

"Why shouldn't you?" said the kid somewhat embarrassed.

"I don't know. If we were two boys we'd talk about 'em, or if we were two girls. Because we aren't, we mustn't, according to some people, but I never could see why."

The kid murmured vaguely. He had always been hedged about with certain conventions. Such frankness was outside his experience.

"This has got to be a tough little town," Noreen went on. "It's a poor place for girls. There isn't anything for them to do, and most of them just hang around hoping some fellow will marry them." She shook her head. "I don't want to be like that—and I'm not going to."

"You're too young to think of getting married," the kid told her with superiority.

"If I drag along here for a few years more like the rest of the girls that's all I *will* have to think about."

But the hotel loomed in front of them, and having his instructions from Noreen, the kid entered, to find Flynn with half a dozen companions.

"Got a message for you," the kid told him.

"Let her go," said Flynn.

"This is private."

Somebody laughed, and the big riverman grinned but stepped aside.

"Miss Maguire wants to see you. She's outside."

Flynn glanced at the clock. "She is early. All right. Tell her I'll be along in a minute." Evidently he had a "date" with Kitty Maguire. The kid rejoined Noreen. Shortly Flynn appeared. His eyes not yet adjusted to the dark, peered at her.

"Who——"

"I'm not Kitty. I'm her sister. She isn't coming—if you expected her. I came to say that my father wants to see you."

"And what does he want to see me for?"

"He'll tell you."

"He will, will he?" said Flynn. "A minute ago comes yon lad sayin' 'Miss Maguire' wants to see me. Now it's th' Big Rust. Well, my girl, you give him me best respects, an' say that I'm to be found around the hotel for a day or two."

"But he can't walk, and you know it."

"I know it well," Flynn grinned.

"Well, you *are* a yellow dog!" snapped Noreen. "Do you want me to tell the lads in the hotel that the crippled father of a girl you've been going with sent word he wanted to see you, and you hadn't the sand to go? Because that's what I'll do."

Flynn swore angrily. To do him justice he would have faced the Big Rust in his prime without hesitation. His refusal had been due to a natural desire to avoid what his instincts told him must be an unpleasant interview. But he was now faced with a more unpleasant alternative. If this little, red-headed devil of a girl meant what she said—and if she took after her father she was likely to—the story would follow him from camp to camp. He could fight and perhaps whip any man who alluded to it to his face, but he

could not fight the ridicule which would be his.

"You've got a good, cold nerve, little wan," he said at last. "Well, I'll see the old man if he wants me to. But who's this lad? Yer felly?"

"No, he isn't. He's just a friend."

The big riverman's hand fell on the kid's shoulder with a power of grip beyond his experience. The great, sinewy fingers clamped down like huge talons. "Ye've been hearin' things that's private," said Flynn. "If ye are a loose-mouthed lad, mend of it. Keep yer trap closed, or ye'll wish ye had."

"I don't talk much," the kid returned.

"See that ye don't," the big man growled, and released him. "Come along, girl!"

Without glancing behind he set off up the street.

"Come with me as far as the house," said Noreen. "I don't want to walk with him—darn him!"

So the kid accompanied her, Flynn's big figure looming far in advance. Presently they lost sight of it. But a hundred yards from the house they saw him, and with him the figure of a girl. His big voice came to them.

"What are ye shakin' about, Kitty? Do ye think he'll eat me? I'm tough chewin' f'r an old dog." Kitty's voice was inaudible. Flynn spoke again. "Rough talk, is it? I wish he had the use of his legs and was twenty years younger, and he'd measure his words to me wid a fine-scale rule. But ye need not be feared I'll lay a hand on him. L'ave him damn me for all he can lay his tongue to, an' welcome. Belike I deserve it." He laughed recklessly. "Come along now, sweetheart, an' open th' door for me till I hear what all he has to say."

He slipped a great arm around her waist and swept her with him toward the house. The two youngsters saw the door close behind them.

"Well," the girl exclaimed, "I guess he's as bad as dad thinks he is. But he's got nerve."

"It doesn't take so much nerve—with your father the way he is."

"Yes, it does," she said. "It takes more. He'd be tickled to death, as he said, if dad was about twenty years younger and a well man. Will you"—she hesitated—"come in?"

"No, of course not. I'll get back to the hotel. I'm going to start for the camp to-morrow. I'm—I'm glad I met you."

"Well, so am I," she admitted with the candor that seemed a part of her. "I think you're my kind of a boy. I'd like to be going up to the shanties with you. It's tough luck—being a girl."

The kid was inclined to agree with her. "I'll write you when I get settled and tell you all about it. And you can tell me what's going on here."

"I've never written a letter to anybody," she demurred. "Seems funny, doesn't it. But I've never had anybody to write to. I wouldn't know how to start."

"You'll have to start some time."

"All right, I will," she consented. "Dad has a book on letter writing. I can get something out of that."

"Those things are no good," said the kid. "Just write anything."

"Well, I'll do the best I can. But you aren't to laugh at me."

"No, of course, I won't."

They shook hands on the bargain, and in farewell. Suddenly she bent forward and kissed him.

"Aw, say!" the kid exclaimed, embarrassed. "I thought you said——"

"I know I did. I've had boys try to kiss me, but I never kissed any of them. I—I just wanted to see if I'd like it."

"Huh!" the kid responded doubtfully. "Do you?"

"Sort of," she admitted. "Do you?"

"Oh, I can stand it," the kid returned with an indifference largely assumed, for the contact of her young lips had stirred something new within him. "How'd it be if I kissed you—to make things even?"

"It wouldn't be," she decided to his surprise. "I don't want to be kissed. I told you it was just a—an experiment. I hate boys' kissing. They —they *slobber!*"

"Oh, all right," said the kid with dignity. "Well —so long."

"So long. And you write me first."

The kid, as he walked back slowly toward the cheerless "bull pen," reflected that girls were a puzzle anyway. Most of them were nuisances. But this one seemed better than the rest. He added the evening to his small stock of experiences, and dropped to sleep, in spite of an uproar from below indicative of a very wet evening indeed, wondering what had transpired between the bad actor Jim Flynn and the Big Rust.

CHAPTER III

AT THE LOGGING CAMP

HE awoke with the first streaks of light, arose and dressed. Nobody else was stirring. Attempting to arouse Mr. Callahan, he was repelled with curses in which other sleepers, partially awakened, joined. So he made his way downstairs and breakfasted alone. There had been a very late session the preceding night, and as late sessions might continue as long as anybody had the price of the same, the kid made up his mind to start by himself. He made a pack of a few small necessities, leaving the rest of his effects to be brought up by the tote team, took his rifle, and set out on his thirty-mile hike.

The morning was clear with a crisp, white frost. The village was silent, its inhabitants not yet out of doors. As he passed Maguire's, smoke from the chimney rose straight in the air, but no one was visible. He swung into the river trail. When he looked back Corktown had vanished.

He had received full directions and anticipated no difficulty in finding his way. For the first ten miles one followed the river trail or a road which paralleled it. Then river and trail swung to the east and one turned northwest on the tote road which led to McLachlin's camp. He made this first ten miles in three hours, taking his time about it. This leg of his journey was the easiest, because he was fresh and the footing good. Also the trail followed water level. When he reached the tote road he sat down for a brief rest. He was already hungry, but decided against eating his lunch just then.

When he entered the tote road he found himself

in the real bush. Along the way, so far, there had been occasional backwoods farms, stump lots, occasional clearings, snake fences. Now these signs of man vanished. The tote road swung sharply, turned around the shoulder of a ridge, crossed an alder swale or corduroy, and plunged into a growth of maple, beech, and elm. The fall frosts had painted the leaves and the winds had strewn them underfoot. The white frost of the night was gone, and wet with the rain which had preceded it, the fallen leaves made a soft and noiseless carpet.

He began to see the small life of the forest. A cock grouse strutted out ahead of him, halted, turned its head, fixed a bright, beady eye on the traveler, and even walked a little way before it rose with a roar of strong wings. Red squirrels, disturbed in their fall foraging, darted halfway up trees and halfway down again, perching on limbs whence, with tails and bodies jerking with indignation, they hurled invective at the intruder. Rabbits, as yet scarcely graying about the ears to match the coming snows, leaped frantically a few yards, to squat as if carven, under protecting bushes, motionless save for wiggling, twitching noses. Once, topping a rise, he saw fifty yards ahead a dog fox, his head cocked, one dainty forepaw lifted, listening for some movement of mouse or mole. But the fox saw him, and was gone, a swiftly stealing streak of red. And here and there along the road he saw signs of deer.

Coming to a clear spring, which rose by the roots of a cedar and trickled away to disappear amid moss and fern, he dropped his pack and ate his lunch. He estimated that he had come halfway, and he was beginning to feel tired. The pack which had seemed featherweight in starting was now an appreciable burden. His feet, in spite of the soft going, were beginning to feel the strain and one was slightly chafed across the toes, as from a wrinkle in lining or sock. He removed his

boots, bathed his feet, and was careful when he adjusted his footgear again, then went on.

In the afternoon he struck an area of rocky barrens, burned over at some distant period, but now covered with a short growth of raspberry and blueberry bushes, presumably, in season, the feeding ground of black bears. The sun was low and the chill of the early fall evening already in the air when he left this behind. But now the tote road wound among swamps, crossing some on corduroy, skirting others. It was gloomy, desolate. Gray trunks of cedars loomed ghostly. All bird and animal life seemed to have vanished. He was glad when the road emerged from the swamps and again struck the hardwoods.

By this time the sun had vanished and the light began to fail. It became dark, and he was very tired. He stumbled now and then over roots and stubs which he could not see. But at last his perseverance was rewarded. He saw a light glimmer for an instant among the trees, then become fixed. He came out into a clearing in which squatted the black bulks of low buildings. Passing the dark stables he made for a small building, lighted brightly with an oil lamp, which he knew must be the "office," the quarters of the foreman, Fred Torrey.

Torrey was long, lean, and leathery. Twenty years in the logging business had spread a maze of wrinkles and crow's-feet outward from the corners of gray eyes. A drooping, blond mustache, yellowed by tobacco smoke, concealed his mouth.

"McPhail wrote me to look out for you," he said when the kid made himself known, "but I couldn't spare a team. Said he was sending in some men, too. See anything of them?" He grunted at the kid's report. "Well, they'll be along when their money's gone. You'll bunk in here with me. Now we'd better get the cook to rustle you some grub."

"Grub" having taken the form of a steak flanked

by three fried eggs, wedges of bread, apple pie, doughnuts, and tea, the kid trailed back, sated and sleepy, to the office. Torrey indicated a bunk.

"That's yours when you want to hit her. Don't mind me. Sleep as long as you like in the mornin'. I'm glad you came, because we're short-handed. Morton, he's been keepin' time and runnin' the van. Now, he can get out in the woods and help me."

Young Ogilvie rolled into thick, soft blankets thankfully. When he awoke it was broad daylight, and he was alone. The foreman's hat and Mackinaw were gone from their peg by the door.

He rose, dressed, and sought breakfast. The men had eaten hours before and gone to the bush. The cook was at work on the foundation of a huge batch of pies. A grizzled and garrulous cookee, with a watery eye, supplied the kid's needs.

"Torrey, he said to let you sleep it out," he remarked. "Said you was tired. Guess you was. Live in town, hey?"

The kid nodded.

"Tell me you was sent up here for your health."

"My health's all right," the kid asserted shortly.

"You may think so," said the old cookee, shaking his head, "but I notice you got a little cough. And you're red-headed. Lot's of fair-complected people's got weak lungs. They tell me when this here consumption gits a holt it's bad. Fresh air sorter helps for a while, but there's no real cure."

"I haven't got consumption," the kid denied indignantly.

"That's the right way to look at it," the cookee soothed him. "It's best not to go thinkin' you got anything long's you can bluff yourself that you ain't. But sooner or later you got to own up. You wouldn't think it to look at me, but I ain't none too healthy myself. I got rheumatism an' kidney trouble. I take gin for that when I can get it. My heart's weak, too, and my stummick's so bad I can't chaw nothin' heavier'n fine cut no

more." And the cookee sighed, and illustrated with a shredded wad the size of a bird's nest, which he transferred from a buckskin sack to his right cheek.

"Then I s'pose you're up here for your health, too," the kid grinned.

"Me?" said the ancient. He dropped his voice to a fine-cut-laden whisper. "I wouldn't want you to mention it, but I got the promise of a foreman's job next season with a firm I know. They ain't ready to cut this year, so I'm just lyin' low, sorter restin' up. I wouldn't go into the woods to be bossed around by Torrey nor no other foreman. That's one thing I can't stand—bein' bossed. Never could. I'm too durn independent."

The kid wandered forth and surveyed the camp. It stood in a natural clearing enlarged by the work of ax and saw. The buildings were of logs, well fitted and chinked. A small creek furnished water. From one side entered the tote road on which he had come. On the other a logging road ran toward the river.

Having nothing to do the kid followed this road, and came upon the crew at work. Save for a casual "Hello, bub!" nobody paid any attention to him. Learning that Torrey had gone on to the river, the kid followed. There he found the foreman overlooking the beginning of a sheer dam intended to divert logs from undesirable shallows below. Plainly there had been a misunderstanding as to construction.

"But Morton told us——" a man was protesting.

"Never mind what he told you," Torrey interrupted. "I'm telling you now."

"All right," the dam builder returned. "It cuts no ice with me. I can take orders—but I like to know who from."

"You'll take 'em from me."

"And not from Morton?"

"I didn't say that."

"He's either got a right to give 'em or he ain't."

"Camp lawyer, are you?" said Torrey. "You get one thing clear: what I say goes without back talk, every time!"

The dam builder spat largely. "All serene-o," he returned. "You're boss. Nobody said you wasn't. If your straw boss suits you I can stand him. Go to it."

Though Torrey said nothing, the kid gained an unfavorable impression of the assistant or "straw" boss, Morton, whom he had not yet seen. Further, he suspected that there was not much cordiality between the latter and Torrey.

That evening Mr. Callahan and his companions appeared, wearied if not repentant, cursing the lack of tote teams.

"It'd serve you right if I told you to get to blazes out of here," said Torrey. "Tote teams! Think we haven't got anything to do but ferry in a bunch of drunks? Think we don't want to put up any logs till after Christmas? You're not sober yet."

"I may not be sober," said Mr. Callahan with dignity, "but annyways I'm dry enough to be."

Torrey grinned. He knew Callahan of old. The latter was a valuable man, a good riverman. "Lots of spring water, Mike. There's a team going down to-morrow, and it'll bring back your plunder."

Later, the kid going back to the office, heard the voice of Morton, the straw boss, raised in complaint.

"If you wanted to pick out a place for the dam yourself why didn't you do it? You leave it to me, and then countermand my orders without telling me. That's not giving me a square deal with the men."

There was a certain justice in this contention, and Torrey admitted it. "I'd have told you if you'd been handy," he said. "But instead of bossing the crew you'd gone to the back line. The men's time belongs to McLachlin. I'm not wasting the day's work of half a dozen men for anybody's feelings."

"Waste—nothing!" said Morton. "The dam was in a good place—better than the one you picked out."

"Are you trying to tell me my business, Morton?" Torrey asked quietly.

Morton perceived that he had gone too far. He was a lean, hatchet-faced man of medium build, restless, nervous. At first he gave an impression of abounding energy; but later one realized that this was fussiness, busyness without much accomplishment. He was both hasty and undecided. Now, the indecision of his nature—the hastiness which called for a show-down and then shrank from it—became apparent.

"All I say is you didn't give me a square deal, and you know it."

"I've told you why," said Torrey. "McLachlin is the first man to get a square deal from me. No use chewing the rag all night. If you don't like it, you know what you can do."

Again Morton refused the show-down.

"Would you like it?" he said.

"If I don't like a thing, I don't eat it," the foreman replied contemptuously.

Morton departed muttering, cursing when he got outside, nursing his grievance. When the kid went in, Torrey, smoking placidly, did not allude to the affair.

"To-morrow," he said, "Morton'll show you about the books and the van. You do things the way he's been doing them. He's got a good system."

Morton lived in the "van," which was a small building holding a small stock of goods, principally clothing and tobacco, for the convenience of the men, their purchases being charged against their pay. Morton had kept the men's time, the books, and tended van, besides acting as Torrey's lieutenant. The advent of the kid relieved him of this indoor employment. This was to his liking, for he desired to be a woods foreman, for which job he

considered himself fully qualified. He had, in fact, considerable practical knowledge, but fell down on the handling of men, in executive ability. The men, shrewd judges of character, soon sized him up accurately. He would have been amazed to learn their collective opinion.

Being constitutionally unable to keep his grievances to himself, after a time he talked to the kid of the raw deal he was getting from Torrey, threatening vaguely, mysteriously. Torrey thought he knew it all. Some day he would show him. The kid received these confidences without comment and wisely kept his own counsel. He liked Torrey, respected him as men invariably respect quiet competence. In proportion he lost respect for Morton.

CHAPTER IV

NOREEN'S LETTER

THE kid soon shook down into a life which suited him very well. Though there were no companions of his own age this bothered him not at all. He solved the problem of the long evenings by sending for a number of books which he had long coveted, and in the light of the knowledge he was fast acquiring he often chuckled at the technical errors of authors he had regarded as infallible authorities He made certain friendships among the men, and received instruction in many things he desired to know. As the indoor work left considerable time at his disposal, he went into the bush, watching the crew at work, and thus gained a good, practical acquaintance with methods of logging.

When the snow came, on Sundays, usually in company with old Tom Benson who knew as much about animals and woodcraft as he did about logs, he made long snowshoe trips. He learned to read the writing spread upon the broad, white page, to distinguish not only the footprints of the different forest inhabitants, but to make more than a guess as to what they had been about. Dainty footprints, leading cautiously to a hole in the snow and turning sharply away in disgust, told of the disappointment of a fox which had hoped to surprise a partridge in her night's shelter. The light prints of enormous pads, a blank space of ten feet or more, and an area of trodden, red-specked snow, marked the end of a rabbit at the jaws of his ancestral enemy, the lynx.

One night he and Benson, returning from a longer than usual Sunday excursion, were overtaken by

darkness a mile or more from the camp. As they swung along, far to their right, from the depths of a frozen swamp, came a sound unlike anything he had ever heard—a deep-chested, fierce, menacing bellow. Involuntarily the hair rose on the back of his neck, and a little, prickling shiver ran down his spine.

"What's that?" he asked.

"Wolf," old Benson replied. "Some of 'em around yet. Makes you shiver, hey? Me too. Funny, ain't it? I guess it's a hangover from the times when men had to stand off them critters with a club, or at best a bow 'n' arrer."

"I wish I could get a crack at him," said the kid eagerly. "Do you think he's on our trail?"

"Couldn't hit him in this light," said Benson practically. "Trail? No. Nowadays a wolf is as shy as a girl without a bathin' suit."

"But I've read in the papers about shantymen being treed by wolves. I read an account last year."

"Somebody hard up for news," said Benson. "I ain't never seen a man that was treed, nor nobody that ever did see anybody that was. I ain't sayin' it ain't possible, some places, in a hard winter, with a big pack that's starvin'; and I guess it used to happen before the brutes got wise to guns. But now you've got to go some even to *see* a wolf."

But the next day the kid went wolfing. He found the trail of the big, gray killer where he had emerged from the swamp, and followed it for an hour. It led straight away, and after following it for an hour he gave it up. Not again all winter did he hear that hoarse, tremendous, daunting voice raised in what is misnamed a howl.

He had remembered his promise to write to Noreen Maguire. With some difficulty, for he had never written to a girl, he composed a letter which amounted to a description of the camp and his life there. Several weeks elapsed before he received a reply.

The reply, when it came, was typewritten upon an old machine which she had told him was among her possessions. Evidently she had studied her father's manual of letter writing; which as evidently represented an early Victorian author's conception of that polite art. Noreen had taken as her model the author's idea of a correct first letter "From a Young Lady to a Young Gentleman." But her departures from specifications were numerous and startling:

DEAR FRIEND: I trust you will not consider it presumptious in me to thus address you, for though our acquaintanceship is comparatively brief, indeed, I value your respect and good opinion highly.

In due course I received your very welcome letter, which my parent and I perused with much interest and enjoyment. You must indeed have witnessed many instructive and diverting things in your travels. I bet you are having a fine time in the shanties. I wish I was there. I fear that, living as I do, peacefully in my happy home, sheltered by the loving care of my dear parent, I have little of moment to record. There is not much doing or fun in this darn town in winter.

Do not you love this season of the year, with its deep mantle of snow, hushing the world in its soft embrace—so pure, so white, so immaculate? Have you got your feet or ears frosted yet? Dad says it is colder than a stepmother's breath up there if you are where the wind can get at you, but O. K. in the bush. There was a shanty lad once froze his feet, and to thaw them out instead of snow or ice water they used a can of keroseen. But the can had been out behind the camboose and was colder than freezing tempratur, for you know keroseen does not freeze, and they put his feet in the

can and when they took them out they were not thawed but frozen solid to halfway up his calves, and he had to have them amputated. That is true, dad says. I trust you are in your wonted good health, but do not use keroseen.

To me the winter season, though pleasurable, is fraught with solemn thought, strange in one so young, a time of reflection. I was snowshoeing with two boys last week, and I tripped getting over a snake fence and stuck fast on my head in a drift with only my legs sticking up, and they pulled me out by them, and then pulled me along on the snow that way laughing. I mean they were. I wasn't. Gee I was mad.

The worst of it was the minister and his wife were passing in a cutter when the boys were draging me by my legs, and she used to be a missionary and sticks her nose into everything, so next day she called on dad to call me down. She said she was deeply shocked, and even the heathen girls of the Congo would not be guilty of such conduct.

Dad said he understood that the girls there didn't do much snowshoeing, and she said that was not what she meant and that I should be sent to some Christian Institution to be brought up. So dad asked her how about the boys, why didn't she get after them? And one word led to another and dad told her to roll her hoop to the place her husband was always talking about when he preached. He did not mention which place, but she took the worst meaning out of it, and it made her mad, and she said he had insulted her and was no gentleman. And dad said then it was an even break, because unless looks were deceiving she wasn't either. That got her goat and she beat it. She is an old cat.

But soon the winter will pass and spring will come, and with it the flowers and the birds.

Thus, to a reflective mind like mine the season typifies hope. I will be darn glad to go fishing again. The boys are too lazy to keep the snow shoveled off the ice for skating, and leave it to us girls to do, and we won't because they should.

We burned the lining out of our heater and had to have it taken down and a new one put in. Dave Conn did the job, and put the pipes up again and they fell down just as he got the fires going and the smoke was awful. Dinny Coyle says when dad was on the river he could start a fire with two wet sticks and no matches when he really turned loose, and from what he said, until the smoke made him cough too hard to say anything, I guess Dinny isn't lying much. He did not know I was there, for he does not do more than easy swearing when I am around. I wish the minister's wife could have heard him. She would know she got off easy.

And now lest I weary you by the recital of these homely trifles which make up my daily life I shall conclude. My dear parent and sister are well and wish to be remembered to you. I don't know just what happened when Flynn saw dad that time, but I know there was a big row and he went away. Some say he is in jail now for fighting or robbing a store or both, but maybe that is all talk. I guess he is a hard man and a bad actor, but I think dad threw a crimp into him that night.

Trusting you will overlook the imperfections of this missive, with kindest regards I subscribe myself, your sincere friend, N. Maguire.

P. S.—If you could get a line on a bear's den and shoot him in the spring when he came out, you could sell the skin or give it to some one you liked. I mean your mother or your sisters. Their hides make good rugs.

The kid chuckled wickedly over the discomfiture of the minister's wife. An interfering woman would get small change out of the Big Rust, whose ideas were as primitive as his speech was direct. He indited a reply, and correspondence flourished. After the first effort, Noreen discarded the manual as unsuited to her needs. In spite of defects of construction, spelling, and punctuation, she mastered the first great principle of letter writing, which is easy, natural expression, after the manner of speech.

It was a hard winter, cold, with heavy snows. The logging road had to be plowed and shoveled out. Off the beaten trails snowshoes were a necessity. There were minor accidents. One man split his foot with an ax, another suffered a broken leg. These things were part of the day's work.

As the winter wore on, the monotony of the life and the restricted association produced their inevitable results. Man may be gregarious, but if he sees too much of his fellow man he is apt to detest him. In restricted society small grievances breed, multiply, and magnify, principally because there is nothing else to occupy the mind. And so in the camp, men who for months had merely tolerated each other, ceased to do so. Several fights occurred for little or no reason. Some came to the conclusion that they needed a change, and asked for their time. And to cap it all, the cook took sick and was replaced by a far inferior artist.

Poor cooking will disorganize a camp as effectually as bad whisky. Torrey promptly fired this cook, but good cooks are rare jewels. He got another who was worse. The men began to grumble.

Torrey reverted to the type of the old logging bosses of his youth, blood brothers of the "bucko" mates of the old Cape Horners. In the course of the day he knocked one man cold for a grumbling word, and had a desperate battle with another, ending by giving him an unmerciful thrashing.

Both men quit. This silenced open grumbling, and put an end to "soldiering" on the job; but it did not cure the discontent, which, once started, continued, though there was a new cook who knew his job.

The winter was nearly over, and the men were becoming restless, desirous of change. They began to ask for their time by twos and threes. Unfortunately these numbered the best men, the river drivers. These could go out, attend to their own affairs or get blissfully drunk with all the trimmings, and at the end of a few weeks get a job from any one of a dozen logging firms, for river drivers are usually at a premium.

Thus Torrey found himself short-handed in the bush, as well as without even the nucleus of a driving crew. He sent an urgent message to headquarters to pick up a spring crew of rivermen at once. They would help with the work in the bush until the roads failed, and be on hand when the river opened.

The spring crew came straggling into camp one night in the rear of a tote team which bore their turkeys. A few were youngsters, but most of them were over thirty, weather-beaten, hard-faced, red of eye, unkempt, and surly. The kid, watching them from the office door, thought he had never seen a harder lot. Just then a man who had been tramping on the farther side of the wagon dropped behind. In spite of the failing light the kid recognized Jim Flynn.

CHAPTER V

TROUBLE IN CAMP

IN a few days it became evident that the new men were fully as hard as they looked. They ruled the roost, dominating the older employees. Flynn seemed to be their acknowledged leader. He had given no sign that he recognized the kid. He and half a dozen of the roughest and toughest held together. They were insubordinate, truculent, insolent; but they were experienced loggers, and Torrey prudently avoided trouble, afraid that they would quit in a bunch and leave him without a driving crew.

At nights there were rackets in the men's camp, fights, usually between the new men and the old. Torrey suspected the presence of whisky, but had nothing on which to hang his suspicions. Knowing the effect of liquor on such a crew the foreman was worried.

"Where did they pick up that spring crew?" young Ogilvie asked him one night.

"Anywhere they could get them, I guess," the foreman replied. "Why?"

"They seem a mighty tough gang."

"Well, this is a logging camp," said Torrey. "Long's a man can handle logs and *does,* that's all I've got to do with him."

But Torrey became more troubled as the days passed. There was wrangling, bad blood, which he was powerless to remedy. The new hands were driving out the old. Among those who quit were the few remaining rivermen. They gave no adequate reason. Torrey could not understand it.

"I'll be takin' me time," Mr. Callahan announced one day. Callahan was a riverman, almost the last

of the old guard. Torrey condescended to persuasion.

"What's wrong, Mike? I hoped you'd stay with it till we got the logs down. The pay's good on the drive."

"It's no better nor Gilmore's nor White's nor Klock's."

"I don't say it is. But it's no worse. Why not stay?"

Mr. Callahan shook his head. "Drivin' on this river is too risky."

Torrey was surprised. "Risky? It's not a patch on some water."

"I don't mislike the river," Mr. Callahan admitted; "but the company I'd be in is not to me likin', an' that's th' trut' of it."

"Bosh!" snorted Torrey. "They're good rivermen."

"No better," Mr. Callahan admitted freely. "Thim that's born to be hanged can take a chance on wather."

"Then *you* needn't worry," Torrey countered.

Mr. Callahan grinned but shook his head.

"If ye want th' whole trut' of it, Torrey, they's chances enough on th' drive widout takin' more on th' good will of th' man workin' alongside ye."

"What's that?" Torrey demanded in amazement. "That's a hard thing to say."

"I said it. I'll be takin' me time."

"Do you mean to tell me," said Torrey incredulously, "that you're afraid some man would trip you, or give you the dirty push on the logs?"

"I've said me say," said Mr. Callahan.

"Who's the man?" Torrey demanded. "If you can prove that any man threatened that, Mike, I'll fire him in a holy minute."

"If a man t'reatened me open," said Mr. Callahan, "he would have me to whip. There's no t'reat, nor am I namin' no names. But I'm goin'."

"Go to hell if you like!" snapped Torrey at the end of his patience.

"Not by wather, annyways," Mr. Callahan returned.

"No," Torrey retorted; "by whisky."

Mr. Callahan did not trouble to deny the insinuation.

"Well, it's a fine, wide road."

"It needs to be—for the crowd on it."

"Good company, annyways," said Mr. Callahan, unmoved, and an hour later went down the road in light marching order.

Torrey pondered deeply. Admitting that Callahan was a fool who wanted to get drunk, he was a good riverman, with a nerve that had never been impeached. He departed from the dignity of a foreman so far as to question one or two of the men, but learned nothing. Finally he spoke to the kid, and thus learned of the rumor that Flynn had once tripped a man in the break of a jam. But there had been no specific trouble between Flynn and Callahan. Nevertheless, if he had known of this before he would have fired Flynn. He believed it had cost him a dozen good men. Now it was too late.

The logging road was beginning to fail and operations were being rushed to conclusion. The snow was sinking fast, draggled heaps in the shade, gone in exposed places. The earth smells began to push up from the soaked ground. An occasional robin was seen. Geese passed high overhead. The bark of poplar and willow took on a brighter hue.

Then one day Torrey was borne into camp on a litter improvised of poles and Mackinaws. A cascading pile of logs had caught him, broken his right leg, and injured him otherwise; only a medical examination could disclose how seriously. But he was lucky to escape with his life. He faced a thirty-mile drive of jolting agony. But his

thoughts were more of his employer than of himself.

"I've got to leave Morton in charge," he said to the kid, "but I'll have the old man send up a river foreman, if he can find one. And now listen here: there's about three thousand dollars in the cash box. That's the pay roll and expense money and so on. McLachlin pays wages in cash on the drive.

"I want you to look after that money yourself. I'll tell Morton. Maybe I'm wrong, but I don't trust some of this crew. Stay right in camp with the cash, and go along with the drive when it starts, and keep with somebody as much as you can. I guess that's all."

"Do the men know about this money?"

"Not the amount. But they know there's a wad of cash for expenses and wages."

The going of Torrey made a difference. Morton was important with new, full authority. He manifested it by a multitude of orders, the overseeing of unimportant details which would better have been left to the discretion of the individual. The wise boss insists upon results, but does not care how they are obtained. The crew, perfectly competent, experienced loggers, resented this close supervision. And so one day when he had lingered, unduly watching the work of a loading gang, with occasional unnecessary suggestions, a cant-hook man named Purdy, one of the new men, suddenly flung down his tool with an eruption of profanity. Morton was genuinely surprised.

"What's the matter with you, Purdy?" he demanded.

"Matter!" Purdy returned with a fresh spout of oaths. "I'll not work wid you nor no other foreman lookin' down th' back of me neck. I've forgot more about loadin' logs nor you ever heard tell of!"

A dozen men heard Purdy's outburst. They suspended work. There was utter silence. Purdy was

big, hard, a veteran who in camp deferred to nobody, not even to Flynn. Morton was being weighed in the balance of the new men.

"Now, now," he said nervously, "no use talking that way. I know you know your business. That's all right, Purdy. Pick up your cant dog and get busy. We haven't got all year to get these logs down." And he moved on.

He thought he had handled the situation diplomatically; but he had handled it ruinously. Even as he turned away from the skidway the scales tipped defiantly against him. Behind his back the men grinned openly. One laughed aloud—and though Morton heard it he did not turn. Though he did not know it, it was curtains for him with that crew. If he could not boss them they could—and would—boss him.

Thereafter they did as they pleased. If he gave an order which a man did not like, it was ignored. All discipline was at an end.

Late one afternoon a team and a light spring wagon drove into camp. The wagon was laden with various trunks and boxes. The driver was thin, scrawny, with a retreating forehead, a retiring chin, and a retiring and fishy eye.

"Hello, boss!" he greeted the kid. "What's the chances for me and the team to put up here overnight?"

"All right, I guess, if you can fix it with the cook and the barn boss."

"I can do that," the stranger returned with confidence. "You the camp boss?"

Young Ogilvie knew this for a clumsy attempt at flattery. "No."

"Well, anyway, I got some stuff I'd like to show you later," the stranger informed him. "I got some pretty nifty, up-to-date stuff for young fellers."

"What sort of stuff?"

"Watches and chains and all sorts of jewelry.

And I got some swell shirts an' braces, an' ties, an' cig'rettes, an' razors, an' knives, an' so on."

The kid recognized the stranger as one of the peripatetic peddlers who visit lumber camps, reaping a rich harvest on the sale of pinchbeck jewelry, shoddy clothing, patent medicines, and various gaudy knickknacks to men who have not seen a store in half a year. Sometimes, however, their stock includes whisky. Not liking this individual's looks, the kid became crafty.

"Peddler—are you?"

"That's what. Roach is my name, but most of the shanty lads call me 'Peddler Dick.' Mebbe you've heard of me?"

The kid had not heard, but doubted if he had lost much thereby. He glanced around with assumed caution and lowered his voice.

"Sure I've heard of you. Say—got any whisky?"

Mr. Roach's fishy eye dwelt on him for a moment, traveled to the interior of the office and came back, meeting his with entire innocence.

"No, I don't peddle whisky. I know some does, but not me. It's agin' the law. And then I can do a better business without whisky, and always be welcome to come back to a camp instead of bein' run out. I got some mighty swell watches, just right for a young feller like you to carry, and I'll let you have your pick for what it cost me."

"I've got a watch, thanks."

"I got some brooches and rings—just right for you to give to your girl."

"Haven't got a girl."

"Aw, g'wan!" Mr. Roach grinned ingratiatingly. "You say it all right. I'll bet you're a young devil with 'em. Well, I'll go fix it up with your barn boss and cook, and I'll see you later."

When the crew came in the cook ostentatiously consulted a very golden watch which he hauled from its resting place by a chain which would

retain its glitter for at least a fortnight. And the barn boss was wearing a sartorial triumph of a tie adorned with a stone of the general dimensions of the Koh-i-noor. Morton frowned at the kid's report. Of late he had been growing nervous.

"You're sure he hasn't got any whisky?"

"He says he hasn't. That's all I know."

"You shouldn't have let him stop."

"I couldn't tell him to turn round and drive thirty miles in the dark."

Morton knew this quite well. "Maybe it's all right. I'll see him later."

He saw the peddler, who was driving a brisk trade, and returned to the office relieved. The men began to drop in to get cash to pay for their purchases. The kid supplied their needs, which seemed rather large.

"What-all are you getting, Jack?" he asked one man.

"Some watches and things."

"Those watches are just junk. They won't run a month. Anyway, what do you want with more than one?"

"Now, I'll tell ye, bub," Jack replied, "I'm buyin' them watches for the children's birthdays."

"I didn't know you were married," said the kid innocently. Jack's eyes twinkled, but his face was grave.

"No more I am. But I'm noted for me foresight."

The kid interrogated Jack no further. The aggregate of the men's expenditure was large. That night there was hilarity in their camp. The lights, which should have been doused at nine o'clock or thereabout, were burning at eleven. Though this was up to Morton he let it go.

In the morning Roach hitched up his team and departed. That night Morton came in with a troubled face.

"That peddler had whisky," he said. "The men

wouldn't half work. There was a bottle or two among them, if I know anything."

"What did you do?"

"Do! What could I do?" Morton demanded fretfully. "I didn't *see* the bottles. I guess they haven't much. They'll be all right to-morrow."

That night at supper it was plain that the supply of liquor had not been exhausted. The men's voices were loud. There were occasional outbursts of blatant profanity. When the meal was over they trooped swaggeringly back to their camp.

Later in the evening the racket penetrated to the office. Morton, making pretense of reading, was nervous. The kid opened the door and listened. The door of the men's camp was open also. There was discordant singing, shouts, and a dull, thunderous roar which he knew came from the dancing board. Suddenly there was added uproar, the crash of wood, and the tumult of combat.

It was distinctly up to Morton. No foreman could afford to ignore such things. The kid looked at him. The man was nervous, uncertain. If he could not handle that hard crew sober he certainly could not do so drunk. The kid knew that Torrey would have forced a show-down before matters reached their present stage; but he admitted to himself that Morton could do little or nothing. The racket subsided momentarily.

"Seem to be quieting down," said Morton hopefully. "You can't be too hard on rivermen. They're drunk now, anyway. The sooner they drink up what they have, the sooner they won't have any."

As he spoke, a lighted lamp sailed through the door of the men's camp, hit the ground and broke. The spattered oil caught fire and burned fiercely, lighting up the log walls. There was no danger, for the lamp had been thrown clear of the building. Men crowded to the door, looked at the blaze, saw the foreman standing in the door, and laughed at him. The laugh stung Morton at last into action.

"They'll be burnin' the camp down next, damn them," he said. "I guess I'll have to go over and quiet them down." He looked at the kid as if for encouragement or remonstrance, but got neither. "You've got a revolver, haven't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, let me have it."

The kid shook his head. He wasn't going to trust Morton, nervous as he plainly was, with a weapon.

"You'd better just talk to 'em. If they won't listen to you, they won't care for a gun."

"It's only in case of trouble," Morton argued.

"I'll go with you. If there's trouble I'll need the gun myself."

"Well, come on," said Morton, after brief hesitation.

Together they crossed to the men's camp. The door was wide open. They stepped inside.

For a moment they were unnoticed. The interior swam in tobacco smoke. On a table stood a two-gallon jug. Its twin lay in fragments on the floor. Every man had a tin cup, robbed from the cook's camp, with which he helped himself. The remains of a couple of wrecked bunks were scattered abroad. The crew was applauding Jim Flynn, who occupied the dancing board.

This was a thin, wooden platform supported by four empty barrels. It was smooth and resilient, and beneath Flynn's flying feet it roared and rumbled like a brigade of tom-toms. The dancer was cutting loose with an abandon and verve produced by whisky acting on abounding energy. The board sprang and thundered beneath him. From his vantage point aloft he was the first to see the intruders. He ceased dancing and pointed to them, throwing back his head in a roar of derisive laughter.

"Look-ut, b'ys! The foreman's come for a drink!"

The men turned, and a sudden silence obtained.

But it was not the silence of respect for authority, the abashed silence following detection in wrong-doing. The kid felt something sinister in it. The men's eyes ignored him, fastening on his companion.

"Now, boys!" said Morton, and paused uncertainly.. Nobody spoke, and he continued nervously. "Now, see here, boys, whisky isn't allowed in camp. You know that as well as I do."

"We ax yer pardon," said a voice in mock contrition. "Do we be after gettin' our time?"

"I'll let it go this time," said Morton, "because I——"

"Th' devil ye will!" the voice interrupted, and now the kid identified it as that of Purdy, the big riverman. "Who asked ye to?"

"If you want your time you can get it," said Morton, driven to retort, and now that he was in action, beginning to get a grip on himself. "I don't mind a little fun, but when you get to smashing things and throwing lighted lamps, that's going too far, and it's got to stop."

"Has it, now?" said Flynn. "And who'll stop it, Morton?"

"I'm boss," said Morton, "and as long as I am——"

"As long as ye are," Flynn interrupted. "And that's as long as we let ye. 'Boss,' says you! There's a dozen men here better fit for the job. Take care, or we'll run ye out of th' woods!"

An answering growl came from the crew. Morton was reaping the reward of the slack hand. He had irritated them by petty supervisions and had been weak when he should have been firm. His authority had gone long ago, and had been replaced by contempt.

But the lack of judgment which was Morton's chief failing now made him take a sudden stand. He was afraid, panicky inwardly, and this very fear made him adopt boldness as the safest course.

"You won't run anything," he returned. "You

get your time in the morning, Flynn. And the rest of you clean up this mess and hit your blankets." He attributed the amazed silence following his words as an indication of success. His voice rose shrilly, in sudden, nervous rage. "Think you can bluff me, do you, just because I've been easy with you? By heavens! I'll let you know who's boss!"

Before any man divined his purpose he sprang forward, seized the jug of whisky and hurled it to the floor, where it smashed.

"There, damn you!" Morton snarled. "Now, I guess you'll sober up!"

A roar of execration drowned his words. The men surged forward. Morton, suddenly realizing his very real peril, caught up an upright of one of the smashed bunks. The kid beside him loyally drew his revolver, menacing Flynn, who crouched tense and bent-kneed on the dancing board.

But Morton's new-found courage evaporated with equal suddenness. He knew that he stood a very good chance of being half killed, of being maimed for life. In panic he hurled his weapon at the head of the nearest man, turned, and ran for his life.

His action distracted the kid's attention. In that instant Flynn left the dancing board as a lynx pounces on a rabbit. The distance between him and the kid was some fifteen feet. He came driving through the air feet first.

The kid had no time to shoot, even had he wished to do so, which he did not, his action having been principally bluff. Flynn's feet struck him on the chest and side, driving him to the floor, where he was trampled down by the rush. He felt the stamping impact of feet, knew that the crowd was momentarily jammed and struggling in the doorway, heard a confused clamor of yells and curses, and then he lost consciousness.

CHAPTER VI

THE PAY ROLL

WHEN it returned Ogilvie was alone. He heard the noise of the hunt for Morton in the darkness far down the tote road, but it was not likely that they would catch him in the dark. Soon the crew would be coming back. They had nothing against him save for his support of Morton, but he decided not to await them there.

When he got to his feet he was giddy, and when he got outside he was sick. He could not have run even if he had wished. He staggered across to the office, barred the door, and fell into his bunk. Utter weariness overwhelmed him. He heard the men straggle back. Apparently they had not caught Morton. Once somebody tried his door tentatively, but he made no response, and whoever it was went away.

Presently he began to recover from the effects of the knock-out, though his chest pained him and his side was stiffening; but he felt reasonably sure that nothing was broken. He was thankful that Flynn had been wearing moccasins. For the first time he realized what a terrible weapon the human foot, shod with the heavy, spiked, driving shoe may be. Then being young and healthy he slept.

He awoke with dawn. His first conscious thought was that there had been trouble, and then he remembered fully. That banished the desire for sleep. He lay quietly, sizing up the situation.

Evidently Morton had got away, and as evidently he would not return. He had been "run out of the woods." And that put a finish to his ambition

to be a foreman, for the story would follow him. It was likely that he would report to McLachlin, who would send in another man if he could find one. This man might even be on the way already.

But, meantime, what was he himself to do? And what would the men do? They were very likely to quit in a bunch and demand their pay. They were a very hard crowd, and he was responsible for the cash in his possession, or at least bound to take the best care he could of it. He was tempted to take it and slip away before the camp was awake.

But after reflection he rejected that idea. He would not be classed with Morton, no matter what happened to him or to the money. Besides, the men were entitled to their pay if they wanted it, by the custom of the camps, without notice. And so he decided that he would remain.

Nevertheless, the thought of the money worried young Ogilvie. He did not trust Flynn and a few of the latter's cronies. He took down his rifle from its pegs on the wall, filled the magazine, and cached it in the narrow space between his bunk and the wall, throwing the blankets carelessly back over it. Opening his cash box, he took out half the currency, which he buried at the bottom of the wood box, scratching chips and bark over them, and replacing the stove wood. Then, seeing smoke coming from the cook's camp, he went to breakfast with pretended nonchalance. The cook, a recent importation, was sour and surly.

"So ye didn't run away wid Morton!" was his greeting.

"Doesn't look like it. They didn't catch him, hey?"

The cook cursed Morton. "They'd have half murdered him, if they had. An' you come off lucky, young feller. Th' nerve of ye, pullin' a gun! Ye ought to be tanned f'r it."

"I blame near got my chest caved in," the kid returned. "What are the men going to do now?"

"They're goin' to quit, of course."

"Are you?"

With profane emphasis the cook replied that he was. "You can make out my time," said he. "And mind you make it out so it runs till I get back to town and get me a new job. I want two weeks extry."

"How do you make that out?"

"Easy. Th' foreman he quits on the crew, and there's no boss, so they quit. There's no one to cook for, so I quit. It's not my fault, an' I want pay for an extry two weeks. By rights I should have it for a month—an' I dunno but what I will."

"Do the men think they are going to get extra time?"

"They don't think it," the cook replied, with a significant grin; "they know it. Here's one will tell ye."

Flynn stood in the doorway. Unwashed, unkempt, red of eye from the night before, he scowled at the kid.

"What have ye got to say for yerself—p'intin' guns at me?" he demanded. "I could have ye jailed f'r it. I'm a notion to hand ye th' father of a lickin'."

"Tell him about th' boys' time," said the cook. "He's doubtin' that th' extry time's comin' to them."

"Small matter what he doubts," said Flynn. "He'll hand over the money that's due."

"I'll do that," said the kid. "But the rule is that a man gets paid up to the time he quits."

"There's a new rule now," said Flynn. "Morton run out on us. So we'll have a fortnight's extry time to make up."

"I can't pay that," said the kid. Flynn's eyes narrowed.

"Ye will pay it. Ye've got th' money—I know

it. Ye'll pay it or we'll take it—and hand ye something to remember besides. When th' b'ys has breakfast, we'll come to th' office. Have th' coin ready."

He began to eat. Apparently his appetite had not suffered. The kid got up.

"It'll take me an hour to make out the time," he said.

Flynn eyed him closely for a moment. The kid withstood his scrutiny.

"See that ye make it out the way I'm tellin' ye," Flynn warned him. "No shenanigans, mind. I can see th' office door from here."

When he reached the office the kid's first action was to lift his rifle from the blankets and put it handy. Among the tools which Torrey had kept with him was a big auger. The kid opened the door until there was just space for the body of one man to squeeze through. On the line of the door thus opened he bored three holes in the heavy, flooring puncheons; and three more on a parallel line some two feet behind them. The second line of holes was bored slantingly toward the first.

Next he selected six small sticks of stove wood. The bottoms of these he shaped with Torrey's keen hand ax to fit the holes. He cut notches a few inches from the tops of three; the tops of the remaining three he beveled to fit the notches. Inserted in their respective holes the beveled pegs slanted toward the door and the notched pegs. He drove them all home until the notches gripped the bevels. Thus he had his door solidly buttressed and braced. Then he got to work in a hurry on the pay roll.

He was not interrupted. The men, having breakfasted, loafed between their camp and the cook's, smoking, keeping an eye on the office door. Apparently Flynn's only suspicion was that he might attempt to escape with the money. When he finished his work, he moved the small table over to-

ward the door. Then he sat down on his bunk with his rifle across his knees.

Presently he heard the men coming. For a moment they paused before the door. Then it shot back, to stop abruptly against the hardwood pegs. "What——" Flynn's voice ejaculated. He gave the door an ineffectual shove. His head and shoulders squeezed inside. "What's this?" he demanded. "Have ye the money ready?"

"It's ready," the kid replied, "but I'm making one or two new rules myself. You men will come in as your names are called, one at a time. The man that comes in will find his pay in the top envelope of that pile on the table. He can count it, if he wants to. Then he gets out and the next man comes in. He doesn't come in till the first man gets his, understand? That means there's never more than one man in here at a time. Have you got that straight?"

"Fine rules, ye young pup!" Flynn returned scornfully. "We'll bust down this door ye've fixed so cunnin', and we'll see about how we'll be paid."

The kid raised his rifle.

"I'm not going to do much talking," he said, "so get what I say now. McLachlin's paying me to look after his money, and I'm going to do it. I'm alone—but I've got the only gun in camp. I know you'll beat me up if I don't get away with this, so I'm not taking one single chance. If you start to break down that door I'll start shooting. If a man shows his face in that door while another man is inside I'll shoot *at* it. Now you back out. Anderson's name is first on the pay roll. Anderson!"

Flynn hung in the wind, glowering. The kid dropped his cheek against the rifle stock.

"Get out—or take it," he said. "Before I count three. I pull on three. Now—one—two——"

Now a shantyman is not a gunman. He settles

his disputes with natural weapons. Occasionally he resorts to axes or peavies, but seldom or never to firearms. As often as not he is a hunter, and as such has a deep respect for a rifle in competent hands. Flynn, barehanded, would have taken a chance on a man of his own weight armed with an ax, but this was a different matter. He looked down the rifle barrel into the kid's eye, and didn't like what he saw there. He might not shoot, but if he did——

Flynn backed out.

The kid drew a breath of relief. He had made up his mind, but if a show-down had been forced he was not sure that he could have summoned nerve enough to crook his finger home on the light pull of the weapon. Suddenly he began to shake. Fearful of himself, he drew up his knees and laid the rifle across them as upon a rest, pointing at the door.

A sudden, heavy blow shook it. Almost unconsciously, in pure reflex action, the kid fired. The bullet crashed through the wood waist-high. Outside there was an explosion of oaths and a sudden silence as the men regarded the splinters in the path of the sporting soft nose.

"He *will* do it!" said somebody.

"Th' little devil's game," said somebody, not without approval. "G'long in, Anderson." Apparently Flynn objected, for the voice continued, "Aw, f'r why should we bother wid th' door. I'll take me pay t'rough a knothole if he wants it, rather nor have a hole dhrilled t'rough me for nawthin'. It makes no differ to me."

The head of Anderson appeared, grinning. "Don't shoot at me, lad. I'm old an' stringy meat. Besides, I'm be way of bein' gun-shy. Me mother was scairt wanst be a fire-cracker."

"I'll be careful," the kid grinned, relieved at Anderson's attitude. "Come along. Your money's in the top envelope."

Anderson, who was one of the few remaining old hands, opened his envelope. His face darkened.

"This ain't right."

"What's the matter with it?"

"It ain't enough. There's no extry pay."

"Of course there isn't. Did you ever know a man to get extra pay when he asked for his time?"

"But, see now, sonny," Anderson argued, "Morton he quits on us, and so——"

"I've heard all that," the kid interrupted. "You've got some fine camp lawyer somewhere. That's all I can pay you, because I'm responsible to McLachlin for the money. Is it a square deal to hold me up for the money I'm responsible to the old man for?"

Anderson scratched his head considering this new angle. "Lookin' at it that way, maybe it ain't," he admitted.

"Well, that's how it is." He saw he had struck the right line, and went on: "If my cash doesn't check up with the time book what's McLachlin going to say to me? What's he going to *do* to me?"

"I wasn't thinkin' of it like that," Anderson admitted. "I am not lookin' f'r to get ye into trouble. Ye say that's what payin' out th' extry money would do?"

"Pretty sure to," said the kid who considered this ruse justifiable under the circumstances. "McLachlin's a hard man."

"Then th' extry money can go to th' devil f'r me," Anderson declared.

"Now, that's white of you," the kid acknowledged. "I wish you'd talk to the boys and tell them how it is."

"I'll do me endeavors," said Anderson doubtfully, "but I dunno. They're a hard bunch to talk to."

When he got outside the kid could hear the sounds of argument. Anderson seemed to have some support. The idea of forcing a boy to hand over money for which he was responsible was new

and repugnant to a number of the men. And, though the kid did not know it, he had secured a certain amount of sympathy by virtue of having elected to fight rather than to back down.

At last big Tim Purdy, the cant-hook man who had locked horns with Morton, declared himself. And Purdy was a noted white-water man, veteran of many a fight.

"Aw, to blazes!" said he. "If McLachlin will hold the b'y f'r the money—and belike th' ould devil will—it's no fair shake to be takin' more nor our time. I like th' b'y f'r his sand, even if it's only a bluff he's runnin', an' it goes wid me, for all th' few dollars differ. An' more: th' man that lays a hand on him while he's standin' up f'r his own, will have me to whip!" With which ultimatum Purdy stared directly at Flynn.

Flynn stared back, his eyes blazing and narrowing. He had never liked Purdy, who had never accorded him the deference which he considered his due.

"You're lookin' my way!" he said.

"Am I?" Purdy returned. "Do ye know any reason why I shouldn't look where I like?"

But just then a brand-new idea occurred to Flynn, and it was one which it was essential to keep entirely to himself. He made up his mind to send Purdy to a hospital—later. He had no doubt of his ability to whip him, but it might be no easy victory. However, he must now save his face or fight.

"If ye want anything out of me," he said, "ye can get it by sayin' th' word or makin' th' move. I'm here, an' I'm waitin'."

Having thus adroitly put it up to Purdy, he spat insolently and stretched himself. But Purdy was too old a bird to force what would probably be the toughest fight of his career, without excellent cause. Watching Flynn closely, lest the latter's seemingly

indolent stretch should be in the nature of a wind-up for a sudden offensive, he passed the buck back.

"If ye want to wait, I can wait just as long," he said. "I am not lookin' for trouble, but ye all heared what I said."

"Meanin' you're afeard of a boy wid a gun!" one of Flynn's supporters sneered. Purdy grinned.

"I saw yer mother's son jump back from yon door when th' bullet went t'rough it. I may be afeard of a b'y wid a gun. But I am not afeard of you, Larry Kavanagh, wid corks on your feet nor wid an ax in your hand, nor of half a dozen like you."

In the office the kid awaited the result of the discussion of which he could hear snatches. Anderson's head appeared.

"Th' boys will take their time as ye have it made out," said he. "There'll be no trouble."

Young Ogilvie nodded, but retained his gun for reasons of his own. "Send 'em along. Brady is next."

And that settled it. Thereafter the kid had no trouble. Flynn, when it came his turn, grinned at him in friendly fashion.

"How does it feel to stand off a hard crew wid a gun? It's something ye can brag about to the girls."

"I'm not bragging," the kid returned diplomatically. "The boys are doing the square thing mostly because they want to. If they didn't I'd stand a poor chance, gun or no gun."

"Maybe that's so," Flynn agreed. "Ye can put away th' gun now. They's no more call for it."

Purdy corroborated Flynn. "It's all right, now, lad. Not a man will lay a hand on ye. Flynn spoke fair. Ye're as safe as if ye was in God's pocket."

And so when the crew was paid off the kid put his rifle up on the pegs and went out into the

spring sunshine. The men had collected their belongings and were getting ready for a start.

"We'll be takin' a team an' wagon to tote our plunder," said Purdy. "You'll be stayin' wid th' camp?"

"I'll have to till somebody comes in. Will you send a telegram to McLachlin for me?"

"I will that," Purdy agreed, putting the message in his pocket. "Good-by and good luck. Maybe we'll meet again some day."

"I hope so," said the kid. He liked the big, truculent riverman, though unaware of the part he had played. "Good luck, Tim."

He watched them tramp off ahead of the team. The forest hid them. The rumble of the wagon and the clanking of the axles in the boxings died away. He was alone in the camp.

CHAPTER VII

ALONE IN CAMP

WITH the going of the human beings the silence of the forest enwrapped the place. The open doors of the cook's camp and bunk house yawned vacantly. The discarded effects of the men—old rubbers, worn-out clothing—flung carelessly on the ground before the latter added to the effect.

The kid, sitting in the sunshine, monarch of all he surveyed, felt like Macaulay's New Zealander. Being blessed, or otherwise, with imagination, he contrasted the present with the camp as he had known it; the lights at night across the deep, winter snows; the row of rough, hard men on the "deacon seat;" the file of them going out heads bent and muffled in the gray dawns, trooping in at dark. Suddenly he felt lonely. There seemed to be no life but his own.

But a wisp of red flickered around the corner of the cook's camp. A squirrel, restless, inquisitive, stood on an end log. A meat bird swooped and bawled raucously. A yellow hammer, brilliant in spring plumage, began to hammer at a log to his liking and to call for his mate. A pair of robins lit on the ground and began their erratic quest for food. And a young rabbit, timorous but inquisitive, hopped out a few feet into the clearing and sat, with his prominent eyes goggling at the spring world.

The kid becoming hungry arose. Squirrel, yellow hammers, and rabbit vanished. Only the robins remained, too busy with foraging and love-making to be disturbed by trifling human beings.

The kid cooked himself a meal, relieved to find a plentiful supply of bread. He fed and watered

the two remaining teams, filled up his wood box, and split a supply for the cooking stove. After that he had nothing to do. He would have nothing to do until McLachlin sent somebody in. But somebody might already be on the way.

In the evening he built a fire in the office against the chill that came with the going down of the sun. He sat by the stove, finding the loneliness rather pleasant than otherwise. After the fashion of imaginative boys, young and old, he began to translate the realities into the unreal—which is romance. The camp was an island in the South Seas. The pines through which a rising wind sang, were palms fringing a lagoon. The office itself was a rude shelter of spars and sailcloth, salvage from the wreck. He himself was the sole survivor, with the treasure which the waves had cast up at his feet.

Half ashamed of this play of fancy, he dug the treasure from the depths of the wood box where he had cached it that morning. But when he had done so he didn't know what to do with it. It seemed safe enough anywhere. Finally he put it beneath his pillow, dropped the heavy bar across the door, and went to sleep.

Usually he slept soundly, but perhaps because of the events of the day he slept lightly, with waking spaces interspersed with dreams, which seemed to follow the lines of his waking imagination. Again he was on the island. It was night. He lay in his shelter listening to the roar of the surf. Then close at hand he heard stealthy footsteps approaching. Next, somebody tried his door.

Young Ogilvie became awake. For a moment the dregs of his dreams lingered, then cleared. There was no door to the shelter of his dreams, but the impression that one had been tried persisted. He lay awake, listening.

Who was the owner of the night-wandering foot? It might be a porcupine, or a bear, hungry from his winter's fasting. Neither porky nor bear, how-

ever, would try a door. But had he really heard that, or was it a dream? He could not decide. Assuming that the door had been tried, who had tried it? The camp was remote, miles from human beings. By that time the men were in Corktown. No casual visitor would reach camp in the gray of dawn. It was a puzzle. But one thing was reasonably certain: if it was a human being he had tried to get in without noise, and had withdrawn with as little as possible, which argued no honest purpose.

The light grew and objects became distinct. He rose and peered out of the little window. But this gave no view of the camp. He could see nothing but the bare-limbed forest.

With the insistent appetite of healthy youth he wanted breakfast, but to get it he would have to cross to the cook's camp and prepare it himself. Still, he could not remain in the office indefinitely because of a possible dream plus porky or bear. After consideration he took the money from under his pillow and distributed it in his pockets. Then picking up his rifle, he unbarred the door.

Throwing it open to the limits of its peg barricade he peered out. Nothing. He stepped outside, looking for tracks; but the frost had been dry and he could distinguish none. There was no sign of life. Only, over in the woods outside the camp, a squirrel chattered and barked at some outrage real or imaginary.

Young Ogilvie crossed to the cook's camp, built a fire, and fried pork with eggs, keeping a wary eye on the door. Occasionally he looked out, but saw nothing. When his meal was ready he sat down with it, facing the door, from which he commanded a view of the office but was himself invisible. He had scarcely done so when a man, moving swiftly, came around the corner of the office and dodged through the open door. Swift as he was the kid recognized him. It was Flynn.

Suddenly his food became unpalatable. He drew his rifle to him and laid in on the table. Flynn, of course, was after the money. That accounted for his acquiescence in the matter of pay. The less others got, the more for him, if he could come back and get it himself. He had hoped to surprise the kid asleep. Failing in that, he had retreated to the bush and watched his chance. Now he was searching for the money. He would not find it. What would be his next move?

The kid continued to eat mechanically, watching the office door. Flynn did not emerge. He finished his breakfast, and still there was no sign. Then Flynn intended to await his return to the office. Hidden behind the door, he would spring on him as he entered. There would be no chance to use his rifle, which, of course, Flynn had seen that he was carrying.

The kid thought hard and fast. Though unarmed, Flynn was formidable. And then he remembered that he had left his revolver behind him. That settled it. He and Flynn could not stay in the camp. He must get down to civilization with the money—if he could. Having come to this conclusion, he went at his preparations nervously, but methodically.

Obviously Flynn would await his return, so that there was no hurry. He made himself a package of pork sandwiches and rolled a double handful of raisins in a paper, after which he sat down on the doorstep, knowing that Flynn was watching him. Presently he rose, crossed to the stables, opened and spread three bales of hay, removed the headstalls of the horses, and propped the door open, knowing that the animals would find water for themselves. He regretted that they were not lighter in weight. But they were heavy, elephantine, slow-moving, draft teams, highly intelligent, wise in the matter of logs, but useless for speed. He would have to go out on foot.

He emerged from the stables whistling, started for the office, appeared to change his mind, and headed for the logging road. Once out of sight of the camp he left the road, circled back and came out on the tote road leading back to Corktown. On it he struck a jog trot which he held for a mile or more. Then he slowed to a brisk walk, chuckling at the thought of Flynn behind the door of the office waiting to garrote him. He flattered himself that he had outwitted him nicely.

By noon he had covered some twelve miles, and his breakfast was a distant memory. Here the road ran straight, as if ruled for a quarter of a mile or more. Just beyond the turn, if he remembered rightly, there was a spring, and he determined to eat his lunch there. At the turn he looked back casually. Into the straight of the road behind him came the figure of a man. There was no doubt of his identity. Flynn had discovered the trick and was after him.

He forgot his longing for pork sandwiches. He had been almost around the turn, and, perhaps, he had not been seen. If not, it might be possible for him to keep his lead and even increase it. He was light, with good wind and good legs, but he doubted if he could outpace the big riverman if the latter had seen him.

At once he broke into a swift trot. He had his rifle, and at the worst Flynn had no more than a cheap revolver, but he suspected that Flynn, alone with him in the bush, would be a harder customer than when surrounded with witnesses, as he had been when bluffed the day before. He paused at another turn of the road and looked back. And there came Flynn at about the same distance. This meant that he, too, had been hitting a swift pace. Once more the kid began to run.

The psychology of the runaway is that it breeds fear. A horse which bolts from mere nervousness, plus a slack rein, becomes terrified. A retreat,

originally well ordered, may easily become a rout. When a man begins to run from anything, with rare exceptions he leaves much of his nerve at the start and sheds more in progression. On the other side running away invites pursuit, among both men and animals.

The kid had run the first time in a calculated attempt to gain distance. Now there was less calculation and more of the animal impulse to escape. The very act of running and feeling that he was pursued sapped his nerve, bred something akin to panic. At last, feeling his wind going and his legs growing heavy, he slowed down, hoping that he had established a lead. He was just getting his wind back when once more he saw his pursuer.

Flynn was coming at a steady gait which lapped up distance like the trotting stride of a moose. More, he was running easily, well within his powers. On his feet were neither the tight river boots nor the clumsy lumbermen's rubbers; but moccasins, the lightest, easiest footgear known to man. And this time he saw his quarry.

The latter ran once more, but as he looked back over his shoulder he saw that Flynn was gaining. If he stayed on the road he must be overtaken and forced to choose between giving up the money and perhaps being eliminated as a precautionary measure, or shooting Flynn. Neither being to his liking, he turned sharply to the right and plunged into the bush.

But he had waited too long in his choice. At this point there was a thin covering of wet snow which left a trail. He heard Flynn crashing along behind him. A small swamp lay across his way, and he floundered through it, taking a fall which plunged his arms to the shoulders in mud and water, and submerged his rifle. He picked it up and ran on.

He emerged from the swamp, but Flynn had gained. His longer legs and greater strength had told in the heavy going. As the boy toiled up the

rising ground Flynn struck the firmer footing and uttered a whoop of satisfaction followed by a string of curses and threats.

The kid saw that something must be done. He could not allow the man to come to close quarters. And suddenly he became indignant at being chased through the woods like a dogged deer and ashamed that, carrying a rifle, he had allowed himself to be. He turned, running a hand along its barrel to wipe off the clinging mud of the swamp, and levered a cartridge home, relieved to find that the action worked smoothly.

"You keep back," he shouted, "or I'll plug you!"

Flynn dodged into the shelter of a windfall, but continued his advance, taking the cover of trees as he came. The kid raised his rifle. He would fire one shot as a bluff, and if that did not stop Flynn he would shoot *at* him. Aiming just in front of Flynn's feet he pulled the trigger.

The result was outside his experience. Instead of the slight recoil and clean, smacking report to which he was accustomed his shoulder received a jarring thump. The report was dull, muffled. Gas blew back in his face. Near the end of the barrel the steel bulged and split open. Too late the kid realized what had happened. A plug of mud inside the barrel had done the damage, causing it to burst. He wrenched at the lever, but the breech block had jammed. The weapon was useless.

Flynn had jumped behind a tree. No novice with a gun, he recognized the strange quality of the report, saw the boy wrenching at the lever, and guessed the trouble. Immediately he rushed. Dropping the useless weapon the kid turned and ran.

The running he had done before was mere sauntering compared with this. He thought he was running for his life, which was possibly the case. He sailed away like a young buck with a speed which he did not know he possessed, and topped a ridge

a hundred yards ahead of his pursuer. Over it, he turned sharply to the left, gained the concealment of young spruce, dodged off again at a right angle, and finally pulled up quite winded.

He did not know where he was, nor where Flynn was; but he knew that he could not have run another fifty yards for all the Flynns on earth. He dropped to the ground and lay gasping.

But his pursuer did not appear, and presently he sat up and listened. The bush was quiet; he heard no sounds of pursuit. The pleasant thought that he had eluded Flynn restored his appetite. He ate and felt better. But he reserved half his store of food because he did not know when he would get his next meal.

He reasoned that Flynn would go back to the road and lie in wait some miles farther along it. Therefore, it would be folly to return to it. The alternative was to parallel its general course, keeping to the bush, a tough job involving hard going. But he decided to make the attempt.

That afternoon he worked his way through hardwoods, Norway ridges, brules, alder thickets, and swamps. The going was bad enough in places, but worse was the constant strain, the fear of encountering Flynn, against whom he would have absolutely no chance. Once he struck the tote road, but shied away from it in panic, much as the comparatively easy traveling tempted him. But when, with darkness coming on, he tried to find it, he could not. As a matter of fact, he was then some three miles from it, and getting farther from it all the time, because it swung away at a wide angle to avoid a string of swamps

When it began to grow dark he stopped. He was wet from swamps, soaking with perspiration, and very tired. But his matches were dry and wood was plentiful. He chose a spot among the thickest spruce he could find, and rustled a supply of wood, starting his fire with the dry, inflammable lower

limbs of spruce. When he had it going he hacked off young, green limbs with his knife and built himself a shelter by the fire. It was not a good one, but it held and reflected the heat to some extent. Again he split his stock of food, and, being tired out, fell asleep. He awoke with the cold half a dozen times, replenished the fire, and dozed off again.

With daylight he endeavored to take his bearings, but was by no means sure of them. As he had merely passed through the country once on the tote road, he knew nothing of its general lie. At first he was so stiff that he could scarcely hobble, but that stiffness passed when he warmed up. The course he had chosen was barred by swamps, which he had to go around. While he was doing this the sun went out of business and it began to rain.

Theoretically the woods traveler may distinguish the points of the compass by moss and rougher bark on the northern exposure of trees. Practically he can do nothing of the kind unless he be very experienced, indeed; in which case he usually has a compass or knows where he is going, anyway. In the present case, half an hour after the sun vanished the kid was hopelessly turned around, without the remotest idea of direction. It was not until late afternoon that the sun showed momentarily, and he found that so far as he could tell he had been going the wrong way.

He now turned directly west, and it took him a couple of hours to reach the tote road. He ventured out on it only after a cautious survey; but he reasoned that Flynn had, perhaps, given up the job or been starved out, for it was unlikely that he had food. So the kid went boldly down the road, and to his surprise—for he did not think he had come so far—soon struck its junction with the river road. That meant that if Flynn had stuck it out he was somewhere behind him, still waiting, or else back in Corktown.

The sun was then going down. He crossed the road and took the river trail, holding it until it became dark, when he returned to the road. Half an hour later, starving, dead on his feet, he saw ahead of him a distant light or two.

But now that his destination was in view, he was in a quandary. There was no train till morning, and but the one hotel. He now knew more about that house than when he had been its guest. Men had been "rolled" there for a fraction of the money in his possession, and the chances were that some of Flynn's crowd, if not Flynn himself, would be there. The only other place he knew was Maguire's. They would give him a meal, and he could sleep anywhere. Yes, that was what he would do. With the decision he felt relieved and limped forward. But as he did so a figure, bulking huge in the darkness, stepped into the road in front of him.

"So I've catched ye at last, me young buck!" said Flynn's voice in triumph.

CHAPTER VIII

HELD UP

YOUNG Ogilvie did not even try to run. He was too utterly tired. He thought dully, with a sense of detachment, that he should have known Flynn would wait there at the outskirts of town instead of miles up the road. Anyway, he had done his best, and the future could now look after itself. He said nothing, waiting.

"A smart young divil ye are, hey!" Flynn went on. "Pullin' a gun on me one time, an' tryin' to shoot me another, an' barrin' doors an' all! Cute, ye was, headin' away up th' loggin' road whistlin', an' then makin' a break back around for town. Thought ye could fool me, did ye? Do ye know what I'm goin' to do wid ye now, me fine young buck?"

"I guess you can do it, whatever it is," Archibald replied wearily. "I'm all in."

"I'm goin' to take th' money that's comin' to me an' th' rest of th' lads; an' I'm goin' to give ye th' lickin' that's comin' to ye; an' then maybe I'll throw ye in th' river."

"You can do all that," the kid admitted, "but you'll go to jail for it."

"Will I?" The big riverman grinned in the darkness. "Drownded men tell no tales."

The kid did not know if he meant it or not. "Then you'll be hanged," he said with more assurance than he felt.

"An' a power of good that will do ye," Flynn grinned. It amused him to play with his victim, whom he did not intend to injure, but wished to frighten. "But I'll not be hanged nor yet jailed, me lad, an' I'll tell ye why. There's them will say

I was wid them all the time after we left camp, an' if ye tell tales they'll make ye out a liar. By gorry! Instead of jailin' me McLachlin will be after ye for stealin' his pay roll an' tellin' a fishy yarn that ye was robbed."

The kid sullenly kicked a stone with his toe. Hatred of Flynn filled him. Flynn had been at the bottom of all the trouble at the camp. He had tried to rob him there, had dogged him through the woods, and now had an alibi framed up which would cast discredit on his honesty. If he had had a gun he would have shot him then without hesitation.

"So that's the fix ye're in," Flynn went on, "an' there's just one way ye can get out of it. An' that's to say that ye left th' money in th' office, as ye always done, an' th' office burned down while ye was gone, an' th' money wid it."

"But the office isn't burned," said the kid. "A fine lie that would be."

"No lie at all," said Flynn with a trace of eagerness in his voice. "I fired it as I left, to make things easy for ye. That's how good-hearted I am. An' I don't say that if ye're a good lad an' stick to that story, I won't let ye keep maybe a hundred for yerself."

"Suppose I don't?" the kid queried.

"Then ye can do th' other thing," said Flynn grimly. "But one thing ye will do, an' now—an' that's hand over the money."

"Oh, all right," the kid returned sullenly, still stubbing the stone with his toe. "I might tell you, you'd burned the money up when you set fire to the office, but you'd go through me, so what's the use?"

"No use at all," said Flynn. "Come on, now!"

"Well," said the kid, "wait till I unlace my boots."

"What for?" Flynn demanded suspiciously.

"The money's laced up in them, shoved down inside my pants' legs."

"Yez ought to be a gyurl wid yer stockin' for a purse," Flynn grinned. "Be quick about it."

The kid stooped, fumbling with his left hand at his boot laces. But the fingers of his right concealed by the darkness sought the stone his foot had encountered, and found it. It was as big as a baseball, almost round, good to grip. His fingers wound around it.

"Get a move on you!" Flynn repeated impatiently. The kid's body and arm swept back, and then forward.

"Take that, damn you!" he shrilled and let the stone drive with all his strength into Flynn's midsection.

The result was much like the historic episode of David and the great Philistine. If the stone had been aimed for the head, Flynn with his wonderful quickness of motion might have dodged. But he had no time to move his body. The stone caught him in the middle with fearful impact. Only the protection of his abdominal muscles, developed by heavy lifting with cant-hook and peavie, saved him from a complete knockout. The kid heard the stone go home with a thump, heard Flynn's grunting gasp, saw him stagger and double over; and then, his weariness forgotten momentarily, he dodged past him and ran for the village.

But his speed was short-lived. He felt his pace slackening in spite of his best efforts. He sped around a turn and almost collided with a slight figure in the darkness.

"Why don't you holler 'gangway!' if you want one?" said a girl's voice, and an electric torch flashed in his face. "Oh, I thought you were—why, it's *you!* Don't you know me? Oh, I forgot, you can't see me." The light left his face to flash on its owner's, and the kid recognized Noreen Maguire.

"Can't stop," he panted. "He'll be right after me."

"Who'll be after you? Are you crazy?"

"Flynn! He's after money—McLachlin's pay roll. I hear him coming now."

She snapped off the light, and shoved him toward the darkness of trees which bordered the road.

"Stay there. Lie down till I come back. You look all in. He can chase *me*."

"No, no," the kid protested.

"Yes, yes." She shoved him insistently. "He can't catch me in a *year*, I tell you. I'll be back. Wait!"

Young Ogilvie dropped flat as Flynn's footsteps approached. The man was running swiftly. He saw the shadowy figure on the road ahead of him, and snarled an oath of satisfaction. Noreen bounded away with a speed which amazed the kid. Flynn swept past, cursing. He heard their footsteps recede. Then came silence.

As bidden he remained where he was and regained his wind. Ten minutes passed, and he heard light footsteps.

"All right," said Noreen's voice. "He's away over the other side of town. I lost him."

She was panting a little but elated, proud of her running.

"I told you he couldn't catch me. Now, what's it all about?"

As he told her she punctuated his relation with indignant exclamations. But her comment was eminently practical.

"I knew there was something up when I saw that gang around town to-day. You can't go to the hotel. You come home with me, and I'll look after you. You look as if you hadn't had a square meal for a week."

"That's mighty good of you," he acknowledged. "I was going to go to your house, anyway. No, I haven't had much grub since yesterday morning."

Immediately she was all solicitude. "Why, you poor boy! And I'm keeping you here talking. Come right along."

"How about your sister?" the kid asked.

"You think she might give you away to Flynn. She isn't home. Went to visit a friend of hers for a week."

Subsequently the kid had merely hazy recollections of the remainder of that evening. He ate hugely, and afterward fell asleep in a chair while the Big Rust was talking to him. He barely remembered being shaken awake and shown to a room where there was a bed. Then came oblivion.

The next thing he knew he was being shaken again. Bright sunlight filled the room. Noreen was tugging at him.

"You are the *sleepiest* boy! I hate to wake you, but your train's due in an hour. Get up and have breakfast."

Unbelievably stiff and sore he scrambled into his clothes and ate hurriedly. When he had taken leave of the Big Rust, Noreen slipped on her coat.

"I'm going to the station with you."

"I'd like to have you, but maybe you'd better not."

"All the same I'm coming. I'm not afraid of Jim Flynn and his crowd. They may think they're bad, but they're not the only dogs in this yard. I know some hardy lads around this town who'd take them to pieces, if I asked them to."

But as it turned out they saw neither Flynn nor his friends. Indeed the former was then a good many miles away, and increasing that distance steadily. The kid said farewell to his young hostess.

"You've been mighty good to me," he said awkwardly.

"Oh, forget it!" she said.

"I won't forget it. And I won't forget you."

"Yes, you will—me, I mean."

"I won't—honest." The train began to move. "I'll write. Good-by, Noreen."

"So long. Be good to yourself!" she responded boy fashion, and waved her hand.

CHAPTER IX

THE KID'S REWARD

RESPECTABLY and uncomfortably clad in the garments of civilization, young Ogilvie sat in the office of old Peter McLachlin. He had handed over the money and his responsibility was at an end. McLachlin, who had the reputation of a canny Scot, tighter than the bark of a tree in a hard winter, thumbed a protruding underlip and scowled from beneath shaggy brows.

"It sairves me right for no' sendin' in a guid foreman when Torrey was hurt," he said; "but at the time I couldna lay my hand on one. However, McClintock will scrape up what crew he can, an' mak' the best o' a bad job. An' now about yon robbin' rascal Flynn."

"Yes," said the kid as the old lumberman paused.

"I might prosecute him," said McLachlin reflectively, "but there wad be a trial to attend, an' fees of lawyers an' such—a varra expensive matter. An' then ye say he has a leein' alibi framed up wi' his fellow rascals. Na, na, it doesna' pay to indulge in law, unless in a ceevil action whaurin ye can recover yer ain costs. So I'll just blacklist yon Flynn, so he'll no be able to get a job whaur pine grows or water runs. But say naething aboot it, lad, for ye ken the blacklist isna for publeecity pairposes. An' now aboot yerself: Ye've saved me money, as was yer duty. What can I do for ye?"

"Well, sir," said the kid, "I'd like to learn the business. I'd like to get a job with you for the summer, and if I made good I'd like to stay."

"Yer father," said McLachlin, "has destined ye for the law; an' yer mother for the meenistry."

"I'd be no good at either," said the kid. "I want

to get into something that isn't all indoor work—and something there's money in."

"Money!" McLachlin ejaculated. "Ma God! hark to him! An' half the lumber concairns in the country on the vairge o' ruin! I'm fair totterin' on the brink o' bankruptcy mysel'. But if yer parents agree I'll mak' a place for ye. Apart from that, lad, ye've saved me conseederable money—mair than two thousan' dollars—from the rapacity of yon Flynn—at some risk to yersel', an' I'm no' unmindful o' my obligations. Here's five dollars, lad, for yer ain. Put it in the bank against a rainy day."

Feeling McLachlin's eyes on him the kid managed to control not only his tongue but his face as well. "Thank you, sir," he acknowledged gravely.

McLachlin brought down a hairy hand on his desk and cackled with laughter.

"Lad, lad, ye'll do. A nice 'thank you, sir,' an' not a quiver of yer face, an' ye thinkin' all the time what a damned auld skinflint I am. I ken I have the name, an' sometimes I have the game; but times I'm no sae bad. Go yer ways, now, an' see McPhail in the office, an' tell him I said to give ye a check for two hunnerd. A fair commession, lad. Ye've earned it."

"You fooled me, sir," the kid grinned. "But I don't want money."

"Tush!" said McLachlin impatiently. "I pay my debts. See McPhail as I told ye."

Obediently the kid sought Sandy McPhail and delivered his message.

"For two hunnerd," said McPhail who had been apprised of his employer's intentions, taking up a pen. "Payable to yerself, is it?"

The kid hesitated for a moment.

"No," he said, "I guess not. I was on the pay roll. If it's all the same to you, make this payable to 'N. Maguire.'"

"An' who's 'N. Maguire?'" McPhail wanted to know, with embarrassing curiosity.

"A—a fellow I owe," the kid replied.

"Ye shouldna' be contractin' debts of twa hunnerd at your age," McPhail reproved him severely.

"I couldn't help this one," said the kid.

"H'm," said McPhail, with memories of certain youthful indiscretions of his own. "A-weel, just ineetials are no' good practice when drawin' checks. What's the 'N' stand for?"

"For 'Noreen,'" the kid replied reluctantly.

"'Noreen!'" the startled McPhail ejaculated. "Yon's a female name, though heathen Irish!"

"It's a girl," the kid confessed, blushing.

"Twa hunnerd dollars to a girl!" the shocked McPhail gasped. "Na, na, laddie, I'll no' draw sic a check wi'oot express instructions from Peter McLachlin himsel'."

"But it's my money," the kid argued, "and I want her to have it. I'll tell you why."

He did so, and McPhail listened, pulling at a blackened pipe.

"So this girl is daughter to him they ca'ed the Big Rust," he said, when the kid had concluded. "I kenned him lang syne—a hard man, violent and profane, but a fine logger, and a man of his word an' honest as the sun. An' now ye say he's a cripple?"

The kid nodded.

"'Tis hard," said McPhail with sympathy. "I mind him when he was in his prime, as light on his feet as a lynx and strong as a bull—a gran' body of a man. Ay, 'tis very hard. An' God knows what savin's he has—if any. Ye say this girl is a good daughter to him?"

"She's proud of him—thinks he's the finest man on earth."

McPhail took up his pen again.

"I'll mak' oot yon check as ye wish," he said; "but whether the girl will tak' it, is another matter entirely."

"Why won't she?" the kid asked in surprise.

"I'm no' sayin' she winna," McPhail qualified; "but the sinfu' pride o' the red Irish is like that o' the bare-shanked, starvelin' Hielanders. Thank God, I'm frae the Lowlands mysel'. If ye write when sendin' the check, be deeplomatic."

The kid dispatched the check to its payee with a covering letter which he had been at pains to word carefully. But a week later it came back to him. In the emergency created by the receipt of a check for two hundred dollars, Noreen had had recourse to the manual of polite letter writing which fortunately had contained a model letter "From a Young Lady Courteously Refusing a Valuable Gift from a Gentleman." But though Noreen had begun in its best form she had swiftly lapsed into the vernacular. She wrote:

> Dear Sir and Friend: I trust you will deem me neither ungrateful nor discourteous, but while I am not inappreciative of the generosity of your gift and the spirit which prompted its sending—for which I thank you sincerely—none the less it is quite impossible that I should retain it; for, as you must be aware—though I do not presume to criticize your interpretation of social usage—a young lady may not accept valuable gifts from gentlemen other than her immediate male relatives and—perhaps?—her *finance*. What do you take me for to think I would take a whole bunch of dough like two hundred bucks from you for nothing at all? You have another think coming and you give me a swift pain. I would not take a single $ or a thin dime from you or anybody unless I had earned it.
>
> When I received your letter and gift I laid the matter before my parent and asked his more experienced counsel and advice, which is that by every rule of propriety the gift must be re-

turned to you at once. So here is your darned check.

Dad says you mean well, but aitch e double ell is full of people who used to. He says that when a man gives the shirt of his back to somebody else it may show he has a warm heart, but it does not say much for his head, and if you had lots of money you would not have been working in the shanties all winter. He says you were a good sport to send it to me; but if I even thought of taking it, I would be a poor sport and no daughter of his. And you bet I am his daughter, and nobody yet ever called me a poor sport and will not get a chance to, even for two hundred dollars. I never saw that much before together all at once like on a check, but dad says he has seen bigger ones.

What will you do with it? I hope you won't blow it. There is nothing in that dad says, though he used to when he was a young man before he got sense. He says the thing to do when you get money is not to go off on a time but to salt it down, and some day you may get a chance to put it into something and make more. Or maybe you will get sick and then you will need it for the best doctor there is, because there is no sense in going to a bum one when you are good and sick, and the best will soak you good but it is worth it. And even if they fall down on the job and do not cure you, and you get your time check in this world and have to quit it, it will always be a comfort to you to think that you are paying for planting yourself, and the boys will not have to pass the hat for you and your widow and kids if you have them by that time. Dad says if you die broke you are sure to have a lot for they most always do. So he says to salt it down.

I have not seen Jim Flynn since and don't know where he is. I guess he got scared and

pulled out. I wish I had seen him when you soaked him in the stummack with that rock. Dad says a rock or a good kick in the stummack will take the steam out of most men because it is so close to their heart it is a shock to it. I would like to try it some day on a boy here who is always trying to play me some dirty trick but I guess it would not be ladylike to kick a boy in the stummack.

The ministers wife has been talking to me about being ladylike and not growing up to be a Tomboy. She says nobody has any use for a Tomboy, and for me to be more dignified and wear longer skirts and do needle work and play crokay instead of fishing and playing ball with the boys; and then maybe when I am older I could marry a minster or a doctor and be looked up to and respected because I am their wife. I do not think it would be much fun to marry a minister judging from her, though a doctor might be handy to have around when you were sick if he was a good one, but anyway I told her I would not give up fishing, but other ways I would try to be ladylike for a while and see how it went. But it is a hard job to be ladylike with the boys in this town. You pretty near have to carry an ax for some of them. They are roughnecks.

I have read this over and I see I said you give me a pain. I only meant that in a ladylike way, so don't get hot about it. I think it was fine of you to send me the check, and maybe some girls would have kept it, but they would have been grafters.

I am going fishing to-morrow and I wish I could cook you a feed of them when I catch them.

I must now close. With sincere thanks and renewed expressions of regret that the conven-

tions of social usage forbid the acceptance of your very generous gift, I subscribe myself your sincere friend, N. MAGUIRE.

"I telled ye so," said McPhail when the kid took the check to him for cancellation and exchange for another payable to himself. "Declined—an' wi' sma' thanks, I'm thinkin'."

"The thanks were all right," said the kid. "I wasn't looking for them anyway."

The check added to his winter's wages formed the nucleus of a modest nest egg.

That summer he entered Peter McLachlin's office. He had in his mind what an eighteen-year-old boy seldom has—a definite plan for his own future. He intended to learn the logging business thoroughly. His preference was for the woods end of the business, the outdoor end, but he realized that a knowledge of the manufacturing, selling and office end was indispensable. He set himself quietly to learn it.

Little by little he dropped out of the orbit of his old circle of acquaintances, the boys and girls of his own age and set. They were on a holiday through the summer, amusing themselves with games, picnics and dances, while he had his regular office hours which were long. Again, after the winter in the shanties, where he had consorted entirely with men, his outlook had changed, become mature beyond his years. The things his old acquaintances deemed of importance now seemed to him trivial, not worth while. By nature he was nongregarious, sufficient unto himself. He was sociable enough, but now the company and conversation and pursuits of his old associates bored him. He was, in fact, beginning to put away childish things.

Meanwhile he was acquiring a new circle of acquaintances older than himself, men married or single, employees of McLachlin or some other lum-

ber operator. In the evenings he liked to drop in on these new friends in their homes. Most of them dwelt in small houses on the outskirts of town near the river front.

There, after supper, they pottered around in shirt-sleeved comfort, doing odd jobs or sitting smoking on their small verandas. They liked the kid and made him welcome. He talked little and listened largely, getting through the eyes of these new-found friends a new view of life.

But best of all, he liked to poke around in odd places along the river front down by the slides where the shaggy, brown-barked forest monsters ran, and the big rafts of hand-hewn, squared timber, split into cribs with sixteen-foot sweeps manned by rivermen, swept through to the quiet waters below. He knew whence these big sticks of pine came. He had seen them standing in plumed grandeur in their native fastnesses; he had seen them sway and totter and fall to the long-drawn, warning cry of "Tim-ber-r!" smashing down in a flurry of flying snow. He had seen them hauled out to the road skidways, and thence on the huge-bunked sleighs to the river rollways. And now here they came, herded along to market as driven cattle by sun-smoked, cat-footed, calked-booted drovers. This, to the kid, was romance.

The kid did not immediately answer Noreen Maguire's letter. When, in the course of the summer, he wrote her, his letter was returned uncalled for by the Corktown post office, and so was a second one. Inquiry elicited the information that the Maguires had left the village, leaving no address.

The kid wondered at this, but there seemed nothing to be done about it. Perhaps Noreen would write him in her own good time from wherever they had gone. But she did not do so, and as time went on, and winter came and passed, she faded from the kid's mind with the easy forgetfulness of youth. Now and then he thought of her as a good pal, a

good little scout, and then he no longer thought of her at all.

The seasons passed, and the kid, pursuing his study of the lumber business, came to young manhood.

Once more he went to the shanties, again keeping time and the van, scaling, and always learning the business. He became a "straw boss" and assistant foreman, second in command. He accompanied the spring drives, wearing calked boots, stagged pants and Mackinaws, and handling pike pole and peavie. He learned the art of river driving, and became wise in the ways of logs in fast water and backwaters, in jams and clear current.

At the age of twenty-five he possessed a clear, comprehensive, practical acquaintance with the logging business from stump to market. He was still with Peter McLachlin, but he was ready to make a change or to strike out for himself when opportunity offered. Then McLachlin died and the business was reorganized. The kid did not like the personnel of the reorganization and quit. He had no difficulty in securing a new job with another firm and, while he accepted it temporarily, he kept a lookout for opportunity to break into the game independently. The logging business was his oyster, and sooner or later he intended to open it.

CHAPTER X

LITTLE FISH

ONE May evening, two young men sat smoking upon the veranda of a weatherworn frame house which faced a river, flat silver in the calm which followed sunset. In front was a small lawn, beautiful in the fresh green of spring, bisected by a gravel walk bordered by freshly raked flower beds. Behind the house was a plot containing a few apple trees, some bushes of small fruits, and a young vegetable garden. The house stood on the outskirts of the small lumbering town of Garrett's Bay.

Before the men stretched a panorama of river, booms, and logs. At the lower end of the booms rose the tall stacks of Grant & Carscallen's big sawmill, and behind these a pillar of smoke, from an ever-burning fire of sawdust, bark, and refuse, stood columnlike in the windless air.

Nearer at hand was a much smaller sawmill, with a more modest system of booms, which were all but empty. But the mills had shut down for the day, and the ripping crash of the big saws, the sharp rasp of the trimmers, the high-pitched whine of the planers, the thunderous roll and thump of log carriers and logs—all the myriad sounds of complex machinery—were still.

Both young men were in the neighborhood of thirty. One was broad, thick-set, powerfully built, with a broad, red, good-humored face expanding easily into a good-natured grin which, however, was at variance with a firm mouth and very level blue eyes. The eyes, though frank and trustful, occasionally held the cold, blue lights of freshly cut ice.

He was dressed in a worn but carefully pressed suit of tweeds, the product of a local tailor.

He was cleanly and shinily shaved, and his soft, low-collared white shirt, which revealed a great, red, muscular neck, was spotlessly clean. He was the owner of the house. His name was Jackson Foss, and he had just concluded a winter's logging contract by delivering the logs to Grant & Carscallen's driving crew a hundred miles upriver. But the contract had not been a striking financial success, for various reasons.

The other man was red-headed, wiry, lean, with a steady eye of raw gray. Like his companion he was dressed in worn tweeds; but these, though of excellent cut and superior material, were badly creased and wrinkled as if they had recently been disinterred from a grip, which, indeed, was the case. This was Archibald Ogilvie, and he had just finished a contract of a certain number of ties for the Peninsular Railway. He had not made as much money thereby as he had expected.

From boyhood to manhood is a far cry; and it was a very far cry from this lean, level-eyed, competent man of thirty, to the diffident, red-headed kid who, a dozen years before, had taken train for his first job in McLachlin's shanties.

Archie Ogilvie, the man, was harder than the promise of the boy. He seemed older even than his years. His mouth was firm and straight almost to grimness, his eyes wary—the wary eyes of the player of a hard game who can afford to overlook nothing. His speech was inclined to be curt, his manner a little brusque, both those of a man who has formed the habit of making quick decisions and issuing orders without explanation.

And yet, beneath this changed, matured and hardened exterior, something of the red-headed kid persisted even in the wary eye and firm mouth.

It seemed that on occasion both might relax and

reveal the eternal boy that dwells in many men. Perhaps it was this masked boyishness which Foss' two children had perceived earlier in the evening with the clear vision of childhood. At any rate they had taken to their father's guest at once, and had hung around him and on him until their bedtime.

Ogilvie was a stranger in Garrett's Bay, having come there on business in connection with the conclusion of his contract. He had made the acquaintance of Foss that day, and Foss, with ready hospitality, had invited him to supper. Afterward the conversation had turned naturally to logs and logging.

Foss handed his guest a fresh cigar and lit another himself.

"Nothing in the game, unless you're in it for yourself," he declared, summing up his experience. "The big fellows always drive a hard bargain with you."

"What do you expect?" Ogilvie commented. "They handle the profitable stuff themselves, and job out the rest. I don't blame them."

"Oh, well, neither do I," Foss admitted. "That's business. I guess I'd do it myself. Some day maybe I'll get the chance."

"Thinking of starting up for yourself?"

"Haven't got enough money. Lord knows if I ever will. I thought I'd clean up three or four thousand last winter, but as it turned out I won't make much more than days' wages."

"I didn't do much better myself," Ogilvie confessed. "Anything go wrong with you?"

"No-o, nothing special. It was a hard country to log. Carscallen's scaler culled me pretty fine. I don't say it wasn't all right, but he was mighty particular, and, of course, I didn't want to raise a row. I'd have got the worst of that. Still, there were a lot of logs left in the bush and the skidways that I

wouldn't have culled out myself, and I used to cull. Carscallen got the best of me on the job, all right."

"Does he run the firm?"

"Just about. Old Grant's away a good deal. Says it's for his health, but he's as sound as a pine knot. He's made his pile anyway. Oh, well, he leaves the business in good hands. I'll hand Carscallen that much."

"You don't seem to like him."

"I don't dislike him, if that's what you mean. Of course he held me down pretty close on this contract, but that was business. Now and then he's given me a chance to make a little money. No, I haven't got anything against him, myself. He'll be a millionaire some day, I guess. They say he's going to marry old Grant's daughter, too."

"Keep the firm in the family," Ogilvie commented.

"I guess so. Still, she's a good-looking girl." He paused as a light buggy drawn by a span of bright bays swung down the stretch of road before the house. "Well, speak of the devil! There's Carscallen now, with Miss Grant. I didn't know she was here. Must be back on a flying visit."

At this time the automobile was a feeble infant. The trotting horse was the accepted medium of personal land locomotion for those who could afford it, and the span of bays, eager, nervous yet tractable, excited Ogilvie's admiration.

The driver, who drew them to a walk at a stretch of water and mud from a recent rain, was a man in the middle thirties, big, well set up, well groomed, with the air of a prosperous man of affairs. His companion was a dark-haired girl in a fawn driving coat. The driver pointed with his whip toward the small sawmill across the river, and the bays, interpreting the gesture as personal, went into their collars with a nervous spring and danced down the road, fighting the strong pull with which their driver held them.

"Afraid of the whip," Ogilvie commented.

"Carscallen was pointing out old Snell's mill. I suppose he was telling her she'd own it—or the firm would—before long."

"Buying it, are they?"

"Well, you might call it that," Foss explained. "You see, old man Snell never logged himself—always bought his logs. Grant & Carscallen offered to buy him out, but he wouldn't sell them. Now he has the devil's own job to get logs. He used to get 'em from other firms, but some of 'em are out of business, and Grant & Carscallen buy all the surplus cut of the rest. So the old man can't get stuff for his saws. You can see his booms are empty, and he's got practically nothing in sight. He tells me he'll have to shut down or sell out to G. & C."

"Business," Ogilvie commented. "I suppose they're under no obligation to find logs for him."

"No, I suppose not. But it's darn hard on the old man. That's the worst of being a little fish. The big fish are always laying for a chance to swallow you."

"Of course," said Ogilvie. "But most of the big fish were small fry once and I'm going to break in for myself as soon as I can. Getting tired of skimming the cream for the other fellow."

"That's so," Foss agreed. "That's what it amounts to. Not married, are you?"

"No."

"Then you can take a longer chance. I have a little money—oh, not much—but whenever I think of putting it into something with a risk hitched to it, I get cold feet and hang onto it."

"And it doesn't grow," Ogilvie commented.

"No," Foss admitted, "it doesn't grow." He was silent for a moment. "But you mustn't think I'm kicking because I'm married, Ogilvie. I wouldn't trade Millie and the kids for any damned sawmill and bank account on earth, you savvy."

"I understand," said Ogilvie.

"Some fellows wouldn't," said Foss. "Maybe something will turn up some day. I know of something right now that there'd be money in, if I had enough to handle it. But I haven't, so what's the use?"

"I have a little money myself," said Ogilvie. Foss eyed him for a moment.

"You mean we might go in together?"

"If we knew a little more about each other, we might consider it."

"There isn't very much to know about me," said Foss. "My father was walking boss for old 'Cap' Young, and I grew up around camps. I don't know much else, but I *do* know that job. I've been in camps all my life. I was bush foreman for Collins & Abbey for two years; and then I was river foreman for Gideon Daly. Lately, I've been on my own. That's all about me. Let's hear you."

Ogilvie nodded.

"I was a town kid. My father was a lawyer. When I was eighteen my folks thought I had bad lungs and sent me up to McLachlin's shanties for my health. I loafed around, and kept time and the van book. I quit school, and went into McLachlin's mills, and stayed there and in his camps till he died and the business was reorganized. I didn't like the new bunch and I quit. So did most of the old crowd.

"Then I was with McDonald Brothers for a year or so, and then with Closson & Phelps. Last couple of years I've been picking up little contracts. Not enough in them. That's all about me. I guess we break about even on the personal side. Now, if you like to tell me more about this thing you mentioned, I'm ready to listen."

"Well, it's pretty big," said Foss. "How much money have you got, if it's a fair question?"

"A little over twenty thousand."

Foss shook his head. "You're stronger than I am,

but I guess it's too big for us. I couldn't put in over five. I've got to think of my family."

"How much would this thing take?"

"About a hundred thousand more than we've got."

"Cash?"

"No, I guess not. But it's too big for us, just the same."

"Half the businesses in this country were started on nerve and credit," Ogilvie pointed out. "If we can put up twenty per cent, we can get credit for the rest—if it's really a good thing. That's what credit's for."

"A bank," Foss objected, "wants you to mortgage your immortal soul."

"The banks I've dealt with," Ogilvie observed dryly, "haven't considered my soul good collateral. We'd have to put up better security than that. You're talking big game for a pair of snipe shooters, but it's big game that's worth going after. I'm not pumping you, Foss, but if you feel like telling me more, I'm interested."

"Well," Foss said, after a moment's hesitation, "I've no objection to telling you that it's timber."

"How much of it?"

"Upward of a hundred million feet—maybe two hundred."

Ogilvie's eyes narrowed in suspicion as he scanned his host's face. "And for sale for a hundred thousand or thereabouts?"

"Yes."

Ogilvie laughed. "You mean to tell me the big fellows have overlooked a bet like that! Don't take me for a sucker, Foss, because I'm not."

"Don't go off half cocked," Foss warned him. "I didn't say they'd overlooked it."

"Then why haven't they bought it?"

"Because it's too hard to log. They don't see how they can get the logs out profitably."

"Is that all?" Ogilvie commented with sarcasm. "You think it's plenty?"

"Don't you?"

"Well, no," Foss replied. "I think I know how it can be done."

Ogilvie smoked in silence for a moment. His gaze held suspicion.

"Is this government timber?"

"No, it was bought up a good many years ago. It's held by a trust company. But they don't own it—only hold it as trustees."

"Who are the beneficiaries?"

"I don't know. It doesn't matter, that I can see. I know the price is a hundred thousand. They can't or won't sell it for less, and nobody, so far, has been willing to pay that, for the reason I told you."

"If you know how to log this profitably, any big firm would talk business with you."

"Yes, they'd *talk* it," said Foss. "They'd keep me talking while they grabbed it. Once give them the idea there was anything to find out and they'd find it out—and leave me out in the cold. No, son, you can't tell me anything about the way the big boys do business—around here, anyway."

"The trustees," Ogilvie pointed out, "would give you a fat commission for any information like that."

"I'm no talker," said Foss. "I'm a logger—and that lets me out. Suppose I did do as you suggest. First thing they'd do would be to go to some big lumber operator. They'd do business with him, and I'd get maybe a few hundreds. I'd rather keep it to myself."

"You're talking to me, and I'm practically a stranger," Ogilvie reminded him.

"So you are," Foss admitted. "But if I'm a dub some ways, I'm not a fool in others. I figure we're both in the same class—little fish, looking for a chance to grow, trying to keep from being fodder for the big fish. Besides, I haven't told you very much yet."

"Not a whole lot. But if you do, what's to prevent me from going to somebody else and throwing you down?"

"Not a thing," Foss admitted. "And there's nothing to prevent you from cutting your own throat next time you shave—if you feel like it."

Ogilvie grinned. "That's so, too. Well, I'll tell you, Foss: This is your show. But if you want a partner I'll go in with you, if you can show me a run for my money."

"On what basis?" Foss asked.

"I put in twenty thousand," Ogilvie replied. "You put in your information and five thousand. If you can't spare that much, all right. We'll try to swing it on my money. On the profits, we split fifty-fifty. Of course, before I go in I'll want to see the stuff for myself."

"Of course," Foss agreed. "You've got a partner. Shake!"

But their conversation was interrupted by the advent of Mrs. Foss, a brown-haired young matron with a humorous mouth and calm, gray eyes.

"Well, Millie," said her husband, "kiddies asleep?"

"I hope so," Millie Foss replied. "Stories! I had to tell them a dozen to-night. Do you know any new stories, Mr. Ogilvie?"

"He's a bachelor, Millie," her husband grinned, "and so he doesn't know anything yet about giants and fairies and such."

"They're getting past giants and fairies—at least Jackie is," sighed Mrs. Foss. "He wants stronger meat."

"Oh, all right," Foss agreed meekly. "But you can't raise a boy under glass, Millie—not in this town. Soon as he gets a little older, I'm going to show him how to handle himself. A few scraps are good for a kid, aren't they, Ogilvie?"

Ogilvie agreed. Mrs. Foss took issue. At the

end of half an hour Ogilvie took his departure. Foss accompanied him to the gate.

"When can you show me that timber?" Ogilvie asked.

"Start to-morrow, if you like. When we leave the railway it's a case of walk. No roads. Take about a week or ten days to give you a good idea. Got an outfit?"

"At the hotel. All right, we'll go to-morrow."

Foss looked after him as he disappeared in the darkness, and returning to the house smoked a pipe in silence. Later he said to his wife:

"Millie, how does that Ogilvie strike you?"

Mrs. Foss, braiding heavy, brown hair over her left shoulder, reflected a moment. "I think he's rather nice. A little reserved. Why?"

"We're thinking of going into a deal together. That's why I asked you. Do you think he's straight? Because if we go in, it'll take all the money we've saved—and more."

Mrs. Foss reflected, tying her braid with ribbon. "I think he's to be trusted, Jack. You saw how the children took to him."

"Huh!" Foss grunted, reflecting that that was a woman's reason for you. "Well, I think he's all right. Only he strikes me as being pretty long-headed; and I'm such a dub myself——"

"You're not!" his wife denied indignantly. "You're just as clever as *I* want you, anyway."

"I'm not as clever as I'd like to be, by a darned sight," said her husband candidly. "I know where I fall down. But I *do* know logging. If Ogilvie can run the business end, we'll make a good team."

CHAPTER XI

LOOKING OVER THE FIELD

FOSS lay back on his blanket and lit his pipe. As he stretched himself he sighed involuntarily. Ogilvie chuckled.

"Think you'll sleep without rocking to-night?"

Foss grinned a trifle sheepishly, for that day he had tried an experiment in endeavoring to walk his prospective partner off his feet. Ogilvie had stood the test. They were now camped for the night some twenty miles inland, in a country devoid of roads or trails, which seemed to be a mess of swamps and ridges, and got rougher as they proceeded.

"You stayed with me, all right," Foss admitted. "What do you think of this country, so far?"

"Mighty little."

"Well, it gets rougher as we go—for a while. We're about ten miles from the Missabini, and about the same distance from Lebret Creek, and you can see for yourself the timber's too scattered and the sleigh haul's too long for any one to log here. Ahead it's worse. This timber we're going after lies in among hills. On the eastern side a lot of hills cut it off from the Missabini, and another lot from Lebret."

"Then what's the answer? A logging railway? Too expensive."

"Sure it would be. That's just what I'm telling you. That's the situation the big fellows' cruisers all reported. No water to drive logs; too expensive railway construction. So they have let it alone."

"And you think you know more than their cruisers?"

"Accidents will happen," Foss grinned. "Re-

member, somebody bought this stuff in the first place. He must have had some idea of handling it."

"Well, why didn't he?" Ogilvie's tone was frankly skeptical. "If he knew so much, why didn't he log it himself or use his information to turn it over? More likely he just got stung."

"Wait till you see the whole thing before you make up your mind," Foss advised.

"All right," said Ogilvie. "But you'll have to show me."

"I expect to," said Foss. His frank face looked troubled. "Remember, I never said it was a cinch. I never claimed to have more than an idea. Maybe it will work, and maybe it won't. You'll have to decide that for yourself."

Ogilvie saw that his half-jesting words had hurt his prospective partner who, he was coming to understand, was extremely sensitive beneath his bluff exterior, easily elated and as easily cast down.

"That's what I came for," he said. "The time to find the weak spots in a thing is before you go into it. That's what I'm trying to do. Because, from what you say, if we go into this thing, we go in beyond our depth, and either come up swimming or stay down."

The next day Foss' promise of rougher country was fulfilled. They struck swamps and barricades of rocky ridges which made sleigh hauls impossible. The lie of the ground trended upward, and the going was very bad indeed. Merchantable timber was scarce and scattered. But on the third day they got into better country and finally into timber such as Ogilvie had rarely seen. The trees ran straight, without knots, towering aloft.

It was beautiful stuff, an isolated remnant of the great, once-continuous forest of the North. But Ogilvie shook his head. It was so good that it should have been snapped up long ago. Something must be wrong, and this, Ogilvie thought, must be the water. To support this timber there must be

moisture, and there were a number of small creeks and many springs, but nowhere was there a stream of driving dimensions. Foss said none existed. Ogilvie was puzzled.

"Well," said Ogilvie, "I've seen the timber. That part is all right. You say it's here because nobody knows how to get it out. Now, how do you think *you* can do it?"

Foss took up a stick and, squatting on his heels, swept the ground illuminated by the fire clean of rubbish. He drew three lines, in the form of a rough triangle, leaving the apex, which pointed toward the north, open.

"This is the way the land lies," he said. "The base represents the height of land we crossed before we came into the timber. One side is the range of hills between us and the Missabini. The other is high ground that runs down all the time, and ends in that rocky shoulder—a sort of little hog's back pushed up across the east side of the flat we're camping on. Get that?"

Ogilvie nodded.

"You see," Foss continued, "we crossed a divide to get into the timber, and ever since then we've been going downhill. That is, if we wanted to deliver logs at this little lake we'd have, generally speaking, an easy, downhill haul."

"Say we get the logs here," said Ogilvie. "What next?"

Foss, with his stick, drew three circles in the triangle's apex, and beyond them a curved line, partially closing it.

"There are three lakes," he said, "this one and two more in the brush that you haven't seen yet. The whole timbered basin drains down here. That makes the marsh and muskeg, and there are more lakes, and a creek which doesn't go anywhere or do anything. It loses itself in miles of swamp and beaver meadow, and comes out twelve miles from here in a swampy lake which drains into

Lebret Creek. You might possibly drive logs on that—if you could get them there. But you couldn't."

"Well?"

"Well, at one time there was a stream right from here to Lebret—or in that direction, anyway. That curved line represents what is left of an old natural dam or dike that shut off the water from the area that is swamp. Then this flat must have been one lake. The old watercourse lies just behind that shoulder and runs down to Lebret. Of course, it's all choked with brush till it looks like a dry gully, but all the same, water *used* to run there. I'll show you the old gravel bars and waterworn boulders. Something, maybe an earthquake, shoved up that ridge, and likely part of the dike sunk at the same time. Then the water had to go north where it couldn't get enough fall to cut a channel, so it made swamps. Now, do you see what I'm getting at?"

Ogilvie whistled softly, skeptically.

"Your idea is to turn water back into the old channel! Can it be done? I mean, can *we* do it! We can't build any Panama Canal, you know. And even if we could get water to run that way, can we get enough?"

"We'll go over the ground in the morning, and you can judge for yourself. I think the old dike can be rebuilt to hold all the water we will get. As to the amount of water, all the little creeks in the timber are choked with logs and brush, which means a tremendous waste by seepage. Only a fraction of the water gets here. Clean them out and give the water a chance to flow, and it would make a big difference. There used to be a good driving stream flowing down the old channel.

"But what I would depend on mainly would be the spring water—a storage of it. There's a heavy snowfall here. We'd have to cut through the shoulder, put in a sluice gate and a slide, and maybe

a couple of dams between here and Lebret to use our water to the best advantage. With that I believe we could get the logs there. Lebret can be driven, all right, and the Missabini is plain sailing. That's the whole thing. What do you think?"

He regarded Ogilvie, his expression anxious, expectant. The latter shook his head.

"I don't know. Tell you more when I go over the ground. But I'm sure it'll cost like the devil."

"But won't that pay for it?" Foss flung out his arms toward the dark timber. "The only reason it's here now is because nobody could figure out any way of beating the game. If it was a cinch it would have been cinched long ago. It wasn't the cost that stopped 'em."

"I don't say it won't pay, if it will work," Ogilvie admitted. "But we have to look at this thing from two angles. We have to figure it out from a construction standpoint of feasibility; and then we have to consider the financial end. We'll have to borrow money, and to do that we have to convince some mighty skeptical men. They'll want to know why the idea hasn't occurred to somebody before now. How did it occur to you?"

"It was mostly an accident," Foss replied. "I first heard of this timber from an old cruiser, who swore it couldn't be got out. Last summer I hadn't much to do, so I came in to have a look for myself, in case somebody had overlooked something. I went over the timber and came down here, and decided that the old man was right. I was sore at myself for wasting my time, and I pulled out, heading for Lebret, which would take me into new country and couldn't be worse than the way I'd come in.

"I dropped over that shoulder and down through the brush, and after a while I had to cross a gully. When I got down into it I went along it for a ways, because the opposite bank was steep, and

I saw an old boulder or two sticking up, and I said to myself: 'Water used to run here some time.' But I was such a chump that I climbed out and went on for a mile or so before it struck me to wonder where the water had come from.

"Then I thought of the little lakes and the choked creeks and all that marsh and swamp, and I turned back and followed the gully up to where it heads not a hundred yards from where I'd crossed the shoulder. That was how I got the idea in the first place. Then, of course, I went over the ground pretty carefully, and I made up my mind that it was possible to reconstruct the old conditions—partly, anyway.

"So I came out and kept the whole thing under my hat, because I didn't know just what to do with it. I'm sure there's big money in it, if it can be swung, but, as you say, it would cost a pile. That's what I told you at first."

"And as you say, the timber will pay for it, if it can be worked at all," said Ogilvie. "We'll go over the whole thing carefully. If it's good, it's too good to turn down."

But that night he lay awake long after Foss' regular breathing told of slumber, turning the problem over in his mind by the light of what he had already seen. For years he had been saving his money, adding it to his modest inheritance, so that when opportunity came he might take advantage of it. But was this opportunity or merely a deadfall? However, he had no one but himself to consider. He was quite alone—in better condition than Foss to take a chance. But before he took it he must be convinced of the feasibility of the scheme in his own mind.

He withheld his decision for three days. In that time he followed the old watercourse to its junction with the waters of Lebret Creek, carefully investigated the remnants of the old natural dike,

now all but invisible by some subsidence of strata, and considered the volume of water of the creeks.

He and Foss came into camp in the afternoon. The latter built a fire while Ogilvie, producing a pencil, began to jot down, in a small notebook, figures which he apparently carried in his head.

"Well," said Foss, "you've seen all there is to be seen. Have you made up your mind yet?"

"I'm going in."

"Bully for you!" cried Foss, gripping his hand. "There's money enough in this to make us both rich. It's lucky I ran across you."

"I hope you think so a year or two from now," said Ogilvie. "We'll have to go so deep in the hole that, if anything goes wrong, we'll never climb out."

"How do we get in?" Foss queried. "How are you going to raise money? *I* wouldn't know how to start."

"If we can buy this stuff on terms, we'll do it, taking the title ourselves and giving a mortgage back. Of course, we may not be able to do that. If not, we'll just have to make the best deal we can. Assuming that we can buy on mortgage, we'll then form a joint stock company, and turn the title over, taking payment in shares, and we'll also buy enough shares to give us control. The rest of the stock we'll sell as we need money for the work."

"I don't like that company idea," Foss objected. "You never know where you're at. Some smooth crook is apt to do you out of your shares, or something. Why not just go into partnership?"

"Because it's easier to raise money the other way. Nobody can do us up, if we keep a majority of the stock."

"All right," said Foss. "That's your end of the show. Me, I'm a logger. We'll pull out of here in the morning. 'Ogilvie & Foss, Limited.' Here's to her. It's a darn shame it's only spring water."

"It's appropriate, anyway," said Ogilvie, "because if we don't get lots of that water we'll be out of luck."

Foss set about preparing supper. Ogilvie resumed his figuring. He happened to glance toward the timber and immediately closed his notebook and put it in his pocket.

"Somebody's coming," he announced. Foss straightened from his culinary labors. Three men were emerging from the timber. All carried packs, and one bore on his shoulder a hooded instrument, either transit or level.

"Looks like a survey outfit running lines," Ogilvie observed.

"I don't like it," said Foss. "I hate to have 'em find us here. I wish we'd pulled out. But it may pay us to find out what they're doing. We're a pretty tough-looking pair—don't look as if we amounted to much. You're a stranger in these parts, and I don't think any of 'em know me. Anyhow, I don't know them. A pair of bush bums—that's us. You let me do the chinning."

Ogilvie nodded and lay down, his shoulders against a log, his hat tilted forward as the strangers approached. Their leader was a tall, rangy individual with a sandy mustache. Of his companions one was a ruddy young fellow of the office-out-of-doors type. These two Ogilvie classed as a surveyor and his assistant. But the third man, from nailed shoepacks to battered felt hat, was a woodsman. He was a big man, bearded, of middle age, but he moved as lightly and springily as a youth. His face, though decidedly hard and dissipated, bore traces of good looks. At sight of him Ogilvie exhaled a soft, hissing breath, and tilted his hat brim farther down against the sun.

"Good day, men," said the leader. "Don't mind neighbors, do you?"

"Not if the children's well behaved," Foss returned. "Mebbe the old folks has got an extry

plug of tobacker they can spare. Me an' my partner's durn near out."

Ogilvie was surprised. He had not suspected his partner of any talent for simulation.

"We can fix that, I guess," the other returned. "We'll camp here, boys, just over there by those spruce."

"Surveyor, mister?" Foss queried. "Seems to me I've seen you somewheres."

"Maybe. I don't remember you. My name is Stevens."

"Thought I'd saw ye," said Foss. "You was runnin' timber lines up at White River ten years ago. Ain't that right?"

Stevens, who had long since quit running lines for more lucrative engineering work, nodded.

"My name is Jackson," said Foss. "His is Archer. Tie hacks—that's us."

"Thinking of getting out ties around here?" Stevens queried. Foss laughed.

"I sh'd say not. They ain't no way of gettin' stuff out of here. We was lookin' over about twenty miles on Lebret, and we didn't find nothin' to suit, so we're crossin' over onto North Lake. I got a touch of lumbago yestiddy, an' we sorter laid up to give her a chance. You don't happen to have no liniment along, do ye? I'd buy it offa you—that is, if you'd take anything fer it."

Stevens had no liniment. Foss sighed with resignation. Well, it don't matter much, I guess. I'll be able to travel to-morrow, if it don't make up for rain. Wet weather's hell on my back. Which way you headin'?"

"We'll stay here for a few days," Stevens told him.

Foss apparently lost interest. "Good place to camp. They's trout in the second lake. They'll take pork an' red flannel. I can give ye a mess for yourself, but I ain't got enough for your two men."

Stevens thanked him, but declined. He would catch some for himself. Foss, who had been kneeling by the fire, arose stiffly, putting his hand on the small of his back, cursing his lumbago. Stevens, bored by this big, garrulous tie hack started for his own camp. Foss, winking at Ogilvie who had maintained a surly silence, deluged him with a flood of profanity, demanding to know if he was to do all the camp chores himself.

Ogilvie, cursing him back loudly, picked up an ax and went for wood. At the raised voices the men making the other camp glanced around, but recognized merely a meaningless and common quarrel between two men tired of each other's exclusive society.

Later Foss hobbled over in quest of tobacco, hinting for a drink, cursing his partner's laziness. He was about through with him. What were the chances for a job with Mr. Stevens for a few weeks, to acquire a grubstake?

They were not bright, and Stevens told him so without circumlocution. Jackson was becoming a pest. The pest, disappointed in his welcome, eventually returned to his own fireside.

"Couldn't get him to loosen up on what he's after," he told Ogilvie. "But you bet he's not just running lines. I didn't know him at first, but now I do. He's got a good business in Falls City."

"Who are the others?"

"The young fellow's name is Johnson. He's Stevens' man. The other, if I know anything, is an old river hog. He's got all the earmarks of a tough bush foreman, but I don't know him, and I know most of them. They call him 'Jim.' Don't know his last name. Now, what's our play? Had we better hang around here or pull out?"

"Pull out," Ogilvie decided. "If we hung around it might look suspicious. But what's worrying me is the possibility that somebody may have bought

this timber already. Stevens may be looking over the ground for a storage dam."

"Good Lord!" Foss exclaimed. "Wouldn't that be the darnedest luck? But I don't think so, Archie. He'd have more men with him. I think somebody else has our idea and has sent him in to check it up before buying. And if that's so, we've got to hustle."

In the morning they made up their packs leisurely, keeping an eye on the other camp. Stevens and his men loitered over their breakfast, apparently in no hurry to get to their work, whatever it was.

"They want us out of the way," Foss deduced. "Well, let's oblige 'em."

"You've left your knife sticking in that log."

"So careless of me," Foss chuckled. "I'm coming back for it. I want to see what they're doing."

They shouldered their packs and slouched past the other camp. Ogilvie did not stop. Foss halted for a moment.

"Well, s'long. Thanks for the tobacker. No word I can take out for ye—no letter nor nothin'?"

There was nothing, and Foss plodded after his companion. When they had covered a mile he stopped and, leaving Ogilvie sitting by the packs, went back. When he returned his face was serious.

"It didn't take 'em long to get busy after we left. Stevens and Johnson were using a level and a rod, or going to. The other man was cutting stakes. Seems to be a bad actor—or thinks he is. I thought he was going to take a birl out of me. He came right along with me to look for my knife. If I hadn't found it, I think he'd have tried to run me out. Anyway, I guess we know enough now."

"Plenty," Ogilvie agreed. "If the timber isn't bought already, somebody's after it and merely waiting for Stevens' report. We've got to get ahead of them—if we can."

CHAPTER XII

A NEW FOREMAN

WHEN Ogilvie entered the offices of the Northern Trust Company in Falls City he bore little resemblance to the red-stubbled tie hack of a week before. He was alone, Foss having left negotiations to him. To his relief he ascertained that the timberland was still open for purchase. Whoever Stevens' principals were they were still evidently awaiting his report.

Ogilvie objected to the price. He intended to pay it, and made the objection merely as a basis for a request for terms. The company's manager, Caldwell, an elderly gentleman with a shrewd, twinkling eye, proceeded to justify it.

"One hundred thousand is really a very low price, Mr.—er—Ogilvie. I'll show you cruisers' reports, if you wish."

"I've cruised it myself," said Ogilvie. "The timber is good, but it will be a very expensive logging. You know what logging railways cost. Of course, if it hadn't been for that difficulty, you'd have sold long ago."

The manager knew this very well. He himself had come to regard the timber as a dead card. But the deed which had created the trust had fixed the sum as a minimum selling price. He could not dispose of it for less, and said so.

"Yes, I understood you held this in trust," said Ogilvie. "Some estate, I suppose."

"Your lawyers will see the deed, if we come to terms," Caldwell replied.

Ogilvie was not interested in the deed, apart from its validity. "I will be quite frank with you, Mr. Caldwell: I think the price is high consider-

ing the difficulty of logging, but we will take the property, if we can agree on terms."

"What terms do you propose?"

"We are prepared to pay ten per cent down, fifteen per cent more in one year, twenty-five at the end of the second year, and the balance at the end of three years; to be secured by a mortgage at current rates of interest covering the whole enterprise. That's the way we should prefer. If it doesn't appeal to you, we will pay five hundred dollars for a sixty-day option, to be applied on the purchase price, if we take it up."

"That is you wish the option to give you time to raise the money to take it up?"

"Exactly."

"May I ask whom you represent?"

"At present I represent Ogilvie & Foss, but I don't suppose you ever heard of us."

"No, I can't say that I have."

"We are a new firm," Ogilvie explained, "just starting in business, and naturally our cash resources are limited. We are going to need them for actual logging operations."

"I see. How would you raise the money to take up the option? You will see the bearing this has on your original proposition."

"Before I go into that, do I understand that you will give us the option at least?"

"Yes, we will do that," Caldwell agreed, after a moment's hesitation.

Ogilvie drew a breath of relief. Promptly he produced a roll of bills and counted off five hundred.

"If you'll give me a receipt for that, Mr. Caldwell, it will constitute a binding option, and I can talk to you more freely."

Caldwell laughed as he picked up a pen, but his laugh expressed approval. "You're not depending much on my verbal assurance, are you?"

"I don't question it in the least," Ogilvie replied,

"but you know as well as I do that I couldn't prove your verbal assurance; and, if I could prove it, as a matter of law I couldn't enforce it. I like to stand on firm ground. Now I'll answer any questions you like to ask."

"How will you raise money on this option, if we don't feel like accepting a mortgage on the terms you have mentioned?"

"This way. Foss and I are both practical men. Between us we have about twenty-five thousand dollars in cash, but no other assets worth mentioning. We estimate the cost of certain construction, which will enable us to log this property, at thirty thousand, roughly speaking. With the purchase price that will make a total of one hundred and thirty thousand to provide for. We will incorporate for say one hundred and fifty thousand. We will then turn in the option at a valuation, taking stock in payment, and sell sufficient stock to pay you and finance our operations. We hope to take care of the cost of the property by a mortgage to somebody else, if you don't care to give us terms."

"I see," Caldwell nodded approvingly. "You think you can sell stock?"

"I'm reasonably sure of it. Of course, to do so and raise money on the property we must be able to show our ability to make money out of it."

"Show me that," said Caldwell, "and we'll see about the mortgage."

"Assume that this timber will cut one hundred million feet," said Ogilvie, "and assume that the construction work I spoke of will cost thirty thousand dollars before we cut a log at all. That will make an initial charge of thirty cents per thousand on the entire cut. That's really the only special feature we have to consider. Other charges will be just the ordinary ones of logging and delivery to mill. Of course, operating on credit we have to pay interest. But lumber prices are mounting and

the market is good. I think we can make out a very good financial case."

"But you can't build a logging railway and buy rolling stock for thirty thousand dollars."

"I didn't say we were going to build a logging railway."

"You said their construction was expensive."

"So it is. And that's why we won't build one. We are going to drive the logs."

Caldwell stared at him. "I suppose you know your own business," he said. "But it is only fair to tell you that to the best of my information there is no stream that can be driven."

"We are going to make one."

Caldwell listened attentively as Ogilvie outlined his plans.

"If your scheme is a success," he admitted, "there is no doubt that you will make money. I think I can say that we will accept a mortgage on the terms you suggested. I will have it prepared at once."

As he came to this decision a clerk entered with a telegram. He read it, glanced at Ogilvie, read it again, and rubbed his chin.

"Young man," he said, "what have you put over on me?"

"I'm not aware that I have put anything over."

"This wire," said Caldwell, "is from the Commercial Bank at Garrett's Bay and advises me that the sum of one hundred thousand dollars has been deposited there to our credit as the purchase price of these lands. They ask me to wire acceptance, and to forward title papers for preparation of conveyance. Now, what do you know about this?"

"Only that we seem to have beaten somebody to it," Ogilvie replied. "When my partner and I left the timber an engineer named Stevens had just come in, and we suspected that he was there for the same object as ourselves. Naturally we lost no time in getting out. That's all I know. I

would infer, though, that this telegram strengthens our position as prospective mortgagors. I think I could take my option down to this bank and turn it over."

"Very likely," Caldwell admitted. "Now we're committed to carrying a mortgage, when we could have fulfilled the conditions of our trust and got out."

"Can you tell me who deposited this money?"

Caldwell shook his head. "We have had inquiries from time to time. This may have been the result of any one of them. If you can find out the clients of this engineer, I suppose you'll find the depositor. If you want to know very badly, take your option to the bank."

Ogilvie was very well pleased as he left the trust company's offices. The narrow margin by which he had beaten out Stevens' unknown employer meant unintentional confirmation of the feasibility of their scheme. He wired Foss, and on his arrival found the latter already engaged in picking up the nucleus of a crew and arranging for supplies.

Pending incorporation he opened an account with the Commercial Bank in the partnership name, and partially explained their plans to the manager. He said nothing of the telegram he had seen, relying upon it to have the effect of helping his credit, if it should be needed. He was not surprised in a few days to receive a proposal through the manager to take over the timber lands at a profit of ten thousand dollars. This offer he refused without hesitation. When it was increased by five thousand he consulted Foss. Foss was inclined to stand pat.

"If it's worth that to somebody else, it's worth it to us," was his line of reasoning. "We can make big money out of this. No trouble finding a market for our logs."

They were seated on the veranda of Foss' house, and Ogilvie eyed the distant mills.

"I wonder if Grant & Carscallen are the fellows who are after it?" he speculated.

"Might be," Foss replied. "I don't know. It would be right in their mitt, of course. They could manufacture the logs with their plant, easily."

Ogilvie was silent for some moments.

"How's the old fellow who owns the little mill coming on? Snell, I think you said his name was. He hasn't many logs in his booms yet."

"He can't get 'em," said Foss. "He's up against it worse than ever this year. I told him we'd sell him next season, and he said he guessed that'd be too late. He's into the bank—some. Of course he has other property, but this is dead horse if he can't get logs, and for that reason no one is apt to buy it. He'd be up against the same thing himself."

"You think Grant & Carscallen are forcing his hand—to buy him out cheap?"

"They may be. If they are I guess they will. The old man's sort of tired—like an old horse that's loaded too heavy. Doesn't go into the collar any more. Yes, sir, I guess the old man's up against it."

"Let's buy him out ourselves," Ogilvie proposed abruptly. Foss stared at him for a moment and then laughed.

"You fooled me that time, Archie. Darned if I didn't think you meant it."

"You're fooling yourself now," Ogilvie returned. "I did mean it."

"What?" Foss exclaimed. "Why, you're crazy! What'd we buy him out with? We couldn't."

"At first you said we couldn't swing the timber."

"That's different. We had some cash and no obligations."

"We hadn't our hooks into anything then, either," said Ogilvie. "Now we have. That makes it

easier. The more credit you need the more you can get—up to a certain point. People expect to give it to you. Get away from the idea that you need cash to do business. It isn't done that way now."

"Well, we'll need all the credit we can get, without this. There's interest on the mortgage and the expenses of construction before we cut a log."

"We'll get money on people's confidence that we can cut logs. We were offered a bonus on our bargain, remember that. If we can cut the logs, we can manufacture—if we have the plant. Why shouldn't we get that, too? You're thinking of the mill as a liability. I tell you it's an asset. It will increase the value of our stock."

"I didn't think of it like that," said Foss doubtfully. "But, all the same, you're boring with a big auger."

"What would buy him out?" Ogilvie asked, ignoring objections.

"Well, it's not a big mill," Foss replied. "Not up to date, either. And the old man wants to get out, I know that. Has a married daughter out West. I believe he'd take thirty thousand for it—mill, river improvements, water rights—the whole shooting match."

"It's worth more," Ogilvie decided, "to us. I'll have to figure on it a little, but, if you agree, we'll buy it. If you think it's biting off too much, say so."

"It's a new idea to me," Foss acknowledged. "A month ago I thought I was doing pretty well if I got a contract to log for somebody else. I don't know what to say."

"Want to ask your wife?" Foss stiffened. "No, I don't mean it that way, Jack. She's got a lot of sense—a good clear head. Let's ask her—both of us."

Mrs. Foss, when the project was explained, approved it.

"If you boys are going broke you might as well break into little bits," she said. "As it is, you'll either make a lot of money or a big failure. With the mill you'll make more money or a bigger failure. It's only a matter of degree."

"That settles it," Foss laughed. "All right, Archie, if you think you can swing this, too, I'm with you."

Eventually Ogilvie swung it. Snell was ready to sell out. He owed the Commercial Bank some twenty thousand dollars and was willing to take ten thousand for his equity. The difficulty came when Ogilvie proposed to substitute the liability of Ogilvie & Foss for that of Snell. The bank objected. The manager advised Ogilvie not to touch the mill.

"If the property wasn't good, you wouldn't have financed Snell along," said Ogilvie.

"Snell has other resources."

"So have we. My judgment tells me this is a good buy, and I know something about the business. You give me a statement of your claim against Snell, and I'll provide for it when his notes come due."

"I doubt if my directors will consent to the substitution of another liability for Snell's."

"Will you tell me why not?" Ogilvie demanded. "Snell has a mill and no logs, which is largely his trouble. He's an old man, on the point of retiring, anyway. We have, or will have, logs. We're a young firm, and you've shown sufficient faith in our future to promise us a line of credit. Don't you see that our acquisition of the mill improves it as a security for you, both for Snell's old debt and the debts we are going to contract? Why, it's obvious."

Apparently the directors saw it in that light, for they agreed to Ogilvie's proposition. Snell was to

manufacture what logs he had before turning the mill over. That done, Ogilvie would shut down until next year, when he would have logs of his own.

Meanwhile Foss had been steadily picking up men, plentiful with the coming of summer and the closing of the winter's camps. He had also bought teams, scrapers, a couple of dump wagons, powder, steel, and a host of tools and supplies.

His first problem was to get this mass of material on the ground over a country absolutely without roads. He intended to go himself, with half a dozen men, and blaze out the most practicable way, doing a certain amount of slashing and swamping out, and then throw a force at it; for by that road all supplies must be brought in while logging operations continued. He himself intended to exercise a general supervision. But he needed a good foreman to oversee the actual work, and such men were scarce. Ogilvie would have plenty to do in looking after the financial and purchasing end.

"You'll find somebody, if you keep on looking," his partner told him. "At the worst you can pick out the best man of the crew. But for the love of Pete make sure of a good *cook*."

One day, however, as Foss had about made up his mind to adopt this suggestion, a stranger, whom he instantly catalogued as an old-time logger, entered the little office the firm had rented. This stranger was tall and lean and leathery, with eyes narrowed to a permanent squint by years of sunlight on water and snow. In age he seemed to be over fifty, and he eyed Foss with calm appraisal.

"Heard you was looking for a foreman," he said without preliminaries.

"I'm looking for a *good* foreman," said Foss.

"Well, I ain't out to blow my own horn," the applicant replied. "I savvy consider'ble about logs, though. Been handling them and bossing bush and river crews for about twenty-five years. So I know

what a crew ought to do. They do it—for me—or I quit."

"Quit much?" Foss asked.

"Never yet," the other replied.

"I should think you'd be with one of the big firms," said Foss, for this old-timer at his own valuation seemed almost too good to be true. The stranger immediately put on his hat.

"You're entitled to do your own thinking," he said. "Sorry I took up your time."

"Hold on," said Foss, but the other paid no attention. As he reached the door it opened to admit Ogilvie who, after a casual glance, uttered an exclamation of amazed pleasure and, pouncing on the stranger, shoved him violently back into the room.

"Well, you darned old mossback! By the glory, but I'm glad to see you again!" he exclaimed. "Don't you know me? I'm the red-headed kid that kept time for you in McLachlin's shanties on the St. Pierre. I'm Archie Ogilvie."

Foss had never seen his partner so enthusiastic. The stranger's face broke into a pleased grin.

"Well, I'll be dad-burned! I never thought when I come hunting a job with Ogilvie & Foss that you were *that* Ogilvie."

"A job!" Ogilvie cried. "Will you take a job with us? Why, my partner, here, has been hunting for a foreman that knows half what you've forgotten. Jack, shake hands with Fred Torrey, my old boss on the St. Pierre."

"Your partner, he thinks I'm a notorious liar and blowhard," said Torrey. "He don't think I can handle a crew, because I told him I could."

Eventually, however, the old logging boss' fur smoothed down, and Ogilvie & Foss thus became possessed of an excellent foreman. Torrey, it appeared, had come into that district seeking new pastures. As he put it, he wished to see some new country before he was laid on the shelf. Actually

he was driven by the unrest of the born pioneer. He had retired from logging and settled down on a little farm. After two years he had sold the farm in disgust and fared forth once more as in the days of his youth, looking for a land of standing timber and running water, and thus he had come to Garrett's Bay.

Leaving Ogilvie to look after the business end, Foss and Torrey departed, taking with them a crew of a dozen men and two teams, to look out and swamp out a practicable road to the scene of their future operations.

CHAPTER XIII

STARTING TO WORK

WITH the departure of his partner Ogilvie turned to organization. In due course he received the certificate of incorporation which enabled him to issue shares. The company then took over the assets of the partnership, consisting of rights in timber lands, and the mill, paying for them in stock, issued to Ogilvie and Foss individually. Ogilvie also bought for himself and Foss additional shares. In all they held individually seven hundred and fifty-one shares, being a majority holding of their total capitalization of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Ogilvie became president and Foss manager, at nominal salaries of one hundred dollars per month.

But personally they were now penniless, and as for the company, first payments on the mortgage, the mill, purchase of supplies and expenses of incorporation emptied the treasury. To provide for expenses of construction it was necessary to raise money at once by the sale of stock. This Ogilvie tried to do. But he found it a difficult matter.

The trouble, as he diagnosed it, was that prospective investors were disinclined to accept his assurance of the feasibility of his plans. He saw that he must have evidence in the form of more expert and disinterested opinion. In this necessity he thought of the engineer, Stevens, who had probably made a report for somebody to whom it was now worthless. Accordingly he went to see Stevens. The engineer laughed when he introduced himself.

"I thought there was something fishy about you two tie hacks," he said. "You looked the part, but I couldn't see what you were doing there."

"And you didn't want us to see what *you* were doing there," Ogilvie returned.

"I was there to make a confidential report."

"On the feasibility of logging by means of a storage dam?"

"Yes," Stevens admitted. "The idea occurred to you, did it?"

"We have bought the timber. Now I would like to get a copy of your report. Of course I expect to pay for it."

Stevens shook his head. "I can't do that. I made the report for another man, and it belongs to him."

"But it's no earthly use to him now."

"That's none of my business. It's his property, useless or not."

"Perhaps I can get it from him. What's his name?"

"When he engaged me he asked me not to mention his connection. As I look at it, I'm still bound."

"All right," said Ogilvie, though he thought the engineer was overscrupulous. "But I suppose there's nothing to prevent you from making a fresh report for me. Will you do that? I have to have expert opinion."

"It wouldn't be worth while for me to go over the thing again," Stevens told him.

"Why not. We'd pay your regular fees."

"You don't get my meaning," the engineer explained. "You seem to expect a favorable report. Well, I couldn't make it."

"What?" Ogilvie explained, startled. "You mean you reported against the feasibility of the scheme?"

"Just that," Stevens nodded. "It's only fair to tell you that much."

For a moment Ogilvie felt that the props had been kicked from beneath his business. He saw the whole thing collapse. Stevens had ability. His adverse report was a hard blow. If that were known he could sell no stock. But if the logs

couldn't be got out, he did not want to sell stock. He and Foss would be the sole losers. They would flivver out, lumber operators for a day, a pair of visionary fools, laughingstocks for the older firms which had turned this timber down.

But immediately he began to rally from the shock. His mind became active. He had faith in his own judgment, and in that of Foss. In spite of Stevens' report, somebody had been anxious to buy. Naturally he had supposed this undisclosed person to be the engineer's client, acting on his report. If not, then somebody else had faith.

"Can you tell me why you reported adversely?" he asked.

"I don't mean that the thing is an engineering impossibility," Stevens replied. "Few things are. But in my opinion the water supply is insufficient, and the feasibility of dam construction doubtful as well as very costly. In fact, the whole thing is a long chance, with all the probabilities against its success."

"Do you think it possible that another look at the ground might change your opinion?"

Stevens shook his head. "I know the conditions now. That's what I base my report on. Unless they change, my report can't."

Ogilvie left the engineer's office discouraged. Stevens was supposed to know his business. It had been necessary to have an engineer's report in order to sell stock. But now one was necessary to find out whether or not he was justified in selling. If the project was no good he would pocket his loss and get a job until he acquired another stake.

In this mood he met a contractor named Baines, whom he knew, and Baines invited him to lunch. Baines chanced to mention an engineer named Lefevre, who had been working for him.

"I have a job for an engineer," said Ogilvie.

"You'll find Lefevre all right. He's a young fellow, but he's there with the goods."

"Think he's as good a man as Stevens?"

Baines' expression changed. "Lefevre is good enough for me," he said.

"Now, what's the matter with Stevens?" Ogilvie asked.

"Well, if you want to know," said Baines, "I'm off Stevens for life. I don't say anything against his ability, but he double crossed me once, and no man gets a chance to do that twice—not with me. I wouldn't trust him as far as I could sling a bull by the tail."

"That's funny," said Ogilvie thoughtfully. "He struck me as almost too conscientious."

Baines grunted.

"You want to watch these conscientious boys," he said with conviction. "When a man lugs his conscience into a business deal I say to myself: 'Sam,' I say, 'look out for that fellow. He'll stack 'em against you if he can, and he'll go shy every time if he thinks nobody's watching the ante.'"

"Apart from too much or too little conscience," said Ogilvie, "I understand Stevens is a good man. Would you take his say-so on an engineering proposition—spend money on it, or refuse to spend?"

"He knows his business," Baines replied; "no doubt about that. But he handed me the double X, and now Lefevre does my work."

Ogilvie obtained the latter's address. Lefevre was at liberty. He and Ogilvie left the next day to look over the ground. They found Foss with his crew driving the road along. Foss went with them. He was disturbed by the adverse report, but refused to accept it as final.

"I don't care a whoop what any engineer says," he asserted. "I know something about water and what I can do with a bush crew. I can fix this

thing all right. Only, of course, that won't help sell stock."

Lefevre went over the ground thoroughly, saying little. At the end of three days he announced his conclusions. Admitting an element of uncertainty, in his opinion their plans were feasible. Ogilvie then told him of the nature of Stevens' report, which he had considered it inadvisable to mention before.

"I didn't know you had got me to check up another man," said Lefevre. "That's not quite fair."

"Perfectly fair," Ogilvie maintained. "Otherwise you might have had an unconscious bias. You're not afraid to set your opinion against Stevens', are you? You're as good a man as he is."

"That's a matter of opinion," said Lefevre. "Stevens is older, better known. I admit he has had more experience. I'm quite ready to justify the conclusions I've reached. But I may tell you that certain facts support Stevens' conclusions. We differ on the relative importance of different facts, that's all. He thinks the chances are against you; I think they're with you."

"Experts aren't expected to agree," Ogilvie laughed. "I want you to write a report I can use in selling stock. I wish you'd bear that feature in mind when you're writing it."

"Just what do you mean by that?" Lefevre asked bluntly, looking him in the eye.

"Not what you think I do," Ogilvie returned. "I want a report as favorable as you can honestly make it, of course; but I want it in nontechnical language, plain to the average man. Get me?"

"I was afraid you meant something else," Lefevre admitted. "I'll do the best I can, of course."

His report turned out more favorable than Ogilvie had anticipated. Though it admitted difficulties the conclusions it reached were favorable and logical. Armed with it Ogilvie once more tried to sell shares.

Small sales would be unsatisfactory, as well as

inadequate. Besides, they would tend to create a numerous body of shareholders, a nuisance to any struggling concern. For the small shareholder is preëminently fussy, nervous, prone to think that things are going to the devil and obtrude advice.

Furthermore he is apt to leak information he obtains as to the company's affairs in right of his stock, just when a judicious silence would be the part of wisdom. Wherefore the heads of any body corporate ordinarily prefer that its shares shall lie in large blocks, strongly held. Ogilvie, then, began to look around for a large sale.

In this, Blackwood, the manager of the bank, had promised to help him, and one day he called Ogilvie into his office. He had mentioned the matter to Carscallen, who was interested.

"If he should take a block of your shares," Blackwood pointed out, "I think it would be a very good thing all around. His name would help you in other stock sales. And then, of course, if he were actively interested with you, it would help the financial end."

"I understand," Ogilvie nodded, for he was fully alive to the benefits Blackwood had indicated. "Thanks for speaking to him. I'll see him at once."

He had met Carscallen casually, and gained the impression that he was a shrewd business man, which was his reputation. He was said to drive a hard bargain, and never to overlook a bet. He lived alone in a comfortable bungalow, looked after by a Chinese cook. In spite of the business of his logging firm which he practically ran alone, he found time to enter into the social life of the small town.

Grant & Carscallen had their offices near their mill, just outside the piling yards. Carscallen was busy when Ogilvie called, and he sat down to wait. Presently a young woman emerged from the lumberman's office. She was a little above the medium height, straight, pleasant of expression, red of hair

as Ogilvie himself, dressed plainly but with extreme neatness, and she carried a notebook and a sheaf of letters. To Ogilvie's surprise the matter of his interview seemed to be referred to her, for she crossed to where he sat. He rose, noting as he did so, that she was nearly his own height. Clear blue eyes, steady, level, direct, met his appraisingly.

"Have you an appointment with Mr. Carscallen?"

"Not exactly, but I think he will see me. My name is Ogilvie."

At the name, she glanced at him swiftly, curiously, as he thought. "Mr. Ogilvie—of Ogilvie & Foss?"

"Yes."

"Oh, then Mr. Carscallen will see you, I think," she said with a smile which revealed firm, even teeth. "Come in, please, Mr. Ogilvie." She tapped on Carscallen's door. "Mr. Ogilvie to see you, Mr. Carscallen."

Carscallen rose with extended hand, greeting Ogilvie cordially. He had intended to look him up, make him acquainted with some people, but he had been away, and since he got back infernally busy. But as he rattled off this greeting Ogilvie felt that he was being sized up. He returned the compliment.

Carscallen was tall, well set up, dark, with a close-clipped mustache, good features, a prominent nose, and hair beginning to thin above the temples. In age he might have been ten years Ogilvie's senior. His manner was assured, positive—the manner bred of success without reversal, the manner that breeds success. He met Ogilvie's eyes squarely, but in his gaze there was a quality of calculation and appraisal. Ogilvie was conscious of similar qualities in his own. Instinctively, without reason, he knew he did not like Carscallen, would never like him, and he felt that Carscallen's feeling toward himself was entirely similar.

But the lumberman extended a box of cigars and took one himself. He rolled it for a moment in his mouth with the keen enjoyment of a devotee, and then clamped it firmly with his teeth.

"Well, Ogilvie, what can I do for you?"

"Blackwood told me he had spoken to you about our business. I'm selling a certain number of shares."

"Yes, so I understand," the lumberman nodded. "The fact is, we had the timber you have purchased cruised some years ago, but as a logging proposition we couldn't see it. Neither could other firms I know of. Now Blackwood tells me you have a plan for handling the logs. If it works out, your stock should be a good investment. Suppose you tell me something about it. I'm open for a good investment, and our concern can always use logs."

Ogilvie outlined their plans and showed him Lefevre's report. Carscallen listened attentively, now and then asking a question.

"If that idea had occurred to us," he said, "I think we should have bought the timber. However, it didn't and we didn't. Who's this engineer who reports on it—Lefevre? What's his professional standing? I don't think I ever heard of him."

Ogilvie's original idea that Stevens had been acting for Carscallen recurred. But if the latter possessed Stevens' adverse report, he would scarcely consider the purchase of shares.

"I don't know much about his standing. He's a graduated civil engineer, and I assume he's competent. Baines, of Baines & Walsh, recommended him. He does all their work, Baines says."

"I know them," Carscallen nodded. "On the strength of this, then, you're going ahead."

"We are going ahead anyway. Foss and I are convinced that our idea will work. But when I came to sell stock I found that investors wanted

an engineer's opinion. So I got Lefevre to report on it."

"On the whole his report is favorable. Then, besides the timber, your assets include Snell's equity in his mill. Going to manufacture?"

"To the capacity of the mill. Of course that is small now, but we may be able to enlarge it later."

"How is your stock held? I presume that you and Foss have control."

Ogilvie told him.

"How large a block of shares do you want to sell?"

"Three hundred—now. That should give us funds enough for our present purposes—prove the proposition one way or the other."

"You think it will do that?"

"That is our estimate."

Carscallen shifted his cigar and tapped his desk thoughtfully with his fingers.

"All right," he said. "You've been frank with me, and I'll be equally open with you. I like your proposition. I don't mind taking chances—never did. I know this is a chance, and if I lose, I won't blame anybody but myself. I'll take your three hundred shares myself—on conditions."

"What are they?" Ogilvie asked warily.

"The first is that I want immediate representation on your directorate in right of this block of stock. If I put up thirty thousand, I must have some say about how it's spent."

"That's fair," Ogilvie agreed. "That can be arranged. Foss and I are the only active directors. What else?"

"That's the main thing. As to your management, you tell me Foss is to be in charge of the woods end, and you of the other. That suits me. I know Foss, and he's a good, practical man. I don't know you, but I like the way you are handling your end. I don't want anything to do with the active manage-

ment, but I do want my opinions to have due weight. I'm conceited enough to think they're worth it."

"I think so myself," Ogilvie admitted frankly.

"Your interests and those of my firm lie together," Carscallen pointed out. "We can supply a market for your oversupply of logs—if you get them. There's one more thing: I think it would be well to put the construction of the dam and so on in charge of an engineer."

"Foss thinks he can do it himself. It will be cheaper."

"It may not be cheaper in the long run. I have always found it a paying policy to hire specialists for special work. Foss is a specialist in logging. And that will keep him busy."

Once more Ogilvie's suspicions stirred. But he told himself they were ridiculous. Carscallen's suggestion was prudent, sensible.

"You may be right," he admitted. "We can't get Lefevre. He's busy for Baines. Can you suggest anybody?"

"I know an engineer named Asseltine," Carscallen replied after a moment's thought. "He's reliable and painstaking. Done work for me before."

This disposed definitely of Ogilvie's suspicions. Utterly illogical as it was, he had half expected Carscallen to name Stevens. And yet it was unthinkable that Carscallen would invest thirty thousand dollars, if the latter's report had been made to him. At the very least he would mention that report.

But Ogilvie considered that he himself was in no way bound to do so. He had obtained expert opinion for himself, and was under no obligation to disclose contrary opinion. He left Carscallen's office with a feeling of relief. Now he would not have to hawk shares around among small buyers. The future was assured, for a time at least, and he could meet his partner's requisitions.

He passed the door of a small office from which came the steady, sustained whir of a typewriter driven at speed with an even, sure touch which told of an expert. He glanced in. The operator was the red-headed girl. She sat before the machine, her back straight, her shoulders squared, her eyes on a notebook just below the level of her eyes, her fingers flying. As he looked, with her left hand she turned a page of her notes. The fingers of her right hand did not even slacken speed.

Swift, coördinated movement had always fascinated Ogilvie. She reached the end of the page in the machine, removed it with a flirt of her hand, sandwiched a carbon between two fresh sheets with the dexterity of legerdemain, inserted them, and started the machine. It was precisely as if she had thrown it into gear. But something, perhaps the intentness of his regard, seemed to communicate itself to the girl. She stopped suddenly and with an exclamation of annoyance ripped the paper from the machine, crumpled it, and threw it at the wastebasket.

As she did so she became aware of Ogilvie's presence. She swung squarely around to face him. Above the blue eyes her brows were drawn in a swift frown. But though plainly annoyed she controlled herself instantly. The frown passed.

"Is there anything you wish?" she asked smoothly.

"I beg your pardon," Ogilvie returned, embarrassed. "I couldn't help watching you. I was admiring your speed."

She laughed, shaking her head.

"I wasn't speeding."

"It looked like it to me."

"Oh, no, I was just jogging along. But I struck a wrong key."

"And for that you destroyed the sheet?"

"I never send out imperfect work."

"At that rate I'd never get a letter written," said Ogilvie with memories of his own encounters with a keyboard. "But I'm afraid it was my fault. You felt that somebody was watching you."

"That shouldn't make any difference. I've given public speed exhibitions and entered speed competitions."

"At any rate I'm sorry."

"Oh, you needn't be," she returned carelessly as she arranged fresh sheets and shot them into the machine. "It happens every so often." She nodded to him and turned to her work. Under her flying fingers the machine whirred at a speed which completely outpaced that which he had thought fast. Plainly this girl was a treasure of a stenographer. And as plainly she discouraged casual conversations.

He became aware that Carscallen was standing in the door of his own office, watching him with a faint, sardonic smile.

"Wait a minute," he said. "I'm going uptown. Trying to flirt with my secretary, Ogilvie?" he laughed, as they left the office together. "I'm afraid it's a waste of time. She doesn't."

"No," Ogilvie returned, "I was merely admiring the way she made that machine talk."

"She's a fast operator," the lumberman admitted, "but so are plenty of girls. The difference is that she's got brains. She hasn't been with me long, but I'm beginning to wonder how I ever got along without her. Well, what do you do with your evenings? Play cards at all?"

"Now and then. But it's got to be a modest game for me."

"Come up and have dinner with me some night next week. Name your evening. My China boy is a good cook, and I'll guarantee the Scotch and cigars."

"Very good of you," Ogilvie acknowledged, "but

I'll be out of town next week. Some other time, if you don't mind."

"Any time. Where are you living?"

"At the hotel at present."

"It's a poor house," said Carscallen. "Now, there's a Mrs. Tarbox who runs a very private boarding house—never more than half a dozen people. I stayed there myself for a year before I got a place of my own, and I can recommend it. She'll talk an arm off you, if you'll let her; but the house is comfortable and the table exceptionally good. I'd try to get in there, if I were you. You can use me for a reference. Well, good-by for the present. Any time you have those shares ready I'll have a check for you."

Ogilvie went on alone. He reflected that he had done much better than he had expected. Carscallen was a good business man, of undoubted financial standing. His association with their enterprise would help in many ways. Though Ogilvie was not greatly attracted by him, he could not allow what amounted to an instinctive dislike to influence him. On the whole, he was very well satisfied with what he had done.

CHAPTER XIV

HOTEL DE TARBOX

TAKING Carscallen's advice, Ogilvie lost no time in looking up the boarding house he had recommended. The structure itself was large, brick, maple-shaded, aforetime the residence of a bygone optimist who had been unable to pay the mortgage moneys which had gone into its construction. Back of it was a tangle of a garden wherein weeds, flowers, and vegetables engaged in an annual struggle for supremacy, the odds being on the former. The disorder, however, was confined to the garden, the house being neatness itself.

Mrs. Tarbox was a product of New England, more or less happily widowed. She was an extremely voluble but kindly soul, tremendously stout. She carried on with the assistance of a lady of color known as "Ury"—which appeared to be a contraction of Eurydice—Jackson, the possessor of a prodigal husband who appeared at unstated intervals, broke and hungry, in quest of financial assistance and food.

When Ogilvie took up his residence at the Hotel de Tarbox, as he called it, there were but three roomers, young business men of the town, though there was accommodation for more.

"I don't say the money wouldn't come in handy," Mrs. Tarbox explained to Ogilvie, "and, of course, I could fill the house a dozen times over if I liked. But roughnecks I will not have, spittin' on the carpets on the sly and rubbin' it out with a boot; nor young four-flushers with high collars and creased pants, goin' to all the dances, with a month's board behind and the same when they skip the tralaloo and leave me ten dirty collars and an old trunk tied with rope; nor yet women, runnin' into

my kitchen for the loan of an iron, doin' their laundry in the bathtub, and pluggin' the plumbin', and dryin' it on windowpanes and chair backs. Them women is the worst of the lot."

And Mrs. Tarbox shook her head until her jowls shook at her sex's shortcomings.

"Aren't you a little hard on the ladies?" Ogilvie commented.

"Not a bit," Mrs. Tarbox affirmed. "Don't I know 'em, bein' one myself. One woman will make more work than three men, kick more, and pay less. Give a man three square meals of solid victuals, a latchkey, and a good bed, and he's satisfied. He's out of the house, except for meals, and at night he sits down comfortable and reads the paper, smokes a cigar or two, and goes to bed. But a woman, she has to have callers—young men, if she's young, or young women—and that means the parlor's all cluttered up mornings, and somebody steps on a choc'late candy and squashes it into the carpet, and the piany has to be tuned, and somebody lays a cigarette on it or on the window or center table, and burns the varnish; and the lights burnin' till all hours—or if they're turned down that's worse—and maybe singin', and everybody in the house gits sore."

"Well, I'm not an expert," Ogilvie laughed. "But men, now: Don't they scatter ashes all over the place, drop burned matches, smoke in bed, and come in at all hours, sometimes with quite a cargo on board?"

"They do all them things," Mrs. Tarbox admitted. "But what else do you expect of men? If I run a boarding house for angels exclusive, how would I pay my taxes?"

Ogilvie found his new quarters a vast improvement on the hotel. He had good food, a comfortable room, and all the privacy he desired. Now and then he saw Carscallen, but so far had not taken advantage of the latter's invitation. Occasionally he had seen the red-haired secretary on the street.

Once or twice, in the evening, she had passed the house. On these occasions she had been accompanied by a little girl, apparently seven or eight years of age.

It occurred to Ogilvie that the secretary might be a widow, with this child to support. He did not know her name. He might have asked Carscallen, but for the latter's remark concerning flirting. But he was not especially interested. He merely thought of her—when he thought of her at all—as "the red-headed girl," and let it go at that, for he had more important matters than red-haired young women, be they maids or widows, to occupy his attention.

Foss had his road in passable shape and was busy freighting in supplies and materials, constructing camps and clearing brush from the creeks. He was in his element, cheerfully leaving business details to his partner. Asseltine, the engineer recommended by Carscallen, was at work on the big retaining dam. Ogilvie went out to see Foss, who met him at the nearer end of the road to report progress.

Foss was surprised when he heard of Carscallen's purchase of stock.

"I never thought you'd sell to him," he commented.

"I was mighty glad to sell to him—to place three hundred shares in a block. It save us all kinds of trouble."

"Of course it shows he thinks well of our prospects," Foss admitted. "I wonder if Stevens was in there for him."

"Couldn't have been. Stevens knocked our idea in his report. If Carscallen had seen that, he wouldn't have bought in."

"You didn't tell him?"

"Of course not. Why should I?"

"No reason, I guess. But I wish Carscallen hadn't butted in with this Asseltine—this engineer. I could have done that work myself."

"I told him that, but he had a pretty good argument. And then he was putting up the money."

"All right," said Foss. "I'm not kicking. But I tell you Torrey and I could have taken a bush crew and some teams and a pile driver and done the job well enough to hold. It wouldn't have been permanent, but who wants it permanent? Now this Asseltine is talking of pressures per foot, and cement work, and the Lord knows what. He's holding up the work while he fiddles around making plans and figures. And then he seems to think he's boss. Some day I'll show him. I'll fire him, that's what I'll do—send him back to Carscallen with a can hitched to him."

Plainly Foss was put out by Asseltine's supervision of that part of the work. Ogilvie soothed his ruffled feelings as best he could. It would not do to have friction with Carscallen. On the other hand, Asseltine must understand that he was an employee of Ogilvie & Foss, Limited, and not of Carscallen. Ogilvie recognized that the engineer's attitude toward Foss would seriously impair the latter's authority with the men.

"I'll go back with you and have a look at things," he said.

He drove in with Foss. He found the remote little flat and the little lakes which had been hidden in brush and timber, transformed. The timber and brush was being cut away everywhere. Robbed of their protection the lakes reflected the sky amid stumps and slashing. A summer camp had been constructed beyond the limits of what was to be the water area. But the logging camps would be in the timber some miles back from the dam.

Ogilvie prowled around for two days. He said little, asked few questions, listened a great deal, and drew his own conclusions. At the end of the second day he went to Asseltine's tent, finding its occupant comfortably relaxed, reading a paper.

The engineer was a tall, thin man of early middle

age, with a limp handclasp and a somewhat supercilious manner. He was immaculately clad in clean khaki and wonderfully polished yellow leather boots. So far as Ogilvie had observed he seemed to spend more time in his tent than on the job.

"I'm going out in the morning," said Ogilvie. "I wish you'd tell me just what your construction plans are—just how you intend to put this dam in. Mr. Foss doesn't seem to have a very clear idea of it."

"Perhaps not," Asseltine returned carelessly. "But I went into that with Mr. Carscallen, and he quite approves my ideas."

"Look here, Asseltine," Ogilvie snapped, "whom do you think you're working for?"

"Why—er——" Asseltine hesitated, his face reddening.

"Because you're working for Ogilvie & Foss, if you have any doubt," Ogilvie informed him. "When Foss or I ask for information we want it—not to be told that somebody else knows all about it."

"Mr. Carscallen engaged me," Asseltine argued. "I understood that he's financing this work. I regard myself as his representative."

"I'm glad to get your viewpoint," said Ogilvie. "Now, get mine: You're an employee of Ogilvie & Foss, of which Mr. Foss is manager and I'm president. Mr. Carscallen is a large shareholder and director. I authorized him to engage you. It's just as well to clear this up, because if you don't happen to like your real employers, or your job, you probably know where you can get others."

Asseltine, red to the ears, did some rapid and unpleasant thinking. He had more or less ignored Foss, but this red-headed young man with the raw-gray eye was a different proposition. And jobs were not too plentiful with him.

"Of course, Mr. Ogilvie," he said. "I've no objection to go into details with you."

"You mean," said Ogilvie, "that you'll go into

details with me as the head of the concern you're working for. Don't you? Because that's the only way I care to have you do it."

"Oh, certainly, certainly," Asseltine agreed. "I meant that, of course."

"All right," said Ogilvie. "Now go ahead and tell me all about it."

Asseltine told him, explaining figures and exhibiting plans.

"Now, see here," said Ogilvie when the engineer had concluded, "this isn't a monument for posterity to contemplate—this storage dam. If it's good enough for four or five years, it's good enough for us. It's a rough, temporary job, the way we figured it originally. That's the thing to bear in mind. So cut out all the heavy, costly work you can. It will be expensive enough anyway. Use all the timber and local stuff you like, but cut out cement work, or cut it to a minimum."

"I must be allowed to do what in my judgment is proper construction," Asseltine asserted.

"Certainly," said Ogilvie. "I'm not trying to teach you your business. I don't pretend to technical knowledge of that kind. I'm just telling you our standpoint—the way we look at this work. Bear that in mind and we'll get along all right."

To Foss he said: "Asseltine's merely had a wrong idea. He was thinking of a dam which would be an everlasting monument to his engineering genius, and he had the idea that Carscallen was his real boss. I've shot both notions to pieces. Keep him at it and make him get his boots muddy. I think he's all right, if you know how to handle him."

Ogilvie returned to Garrett's Bay not very well satisfied with Asseltine. But he did not want friction with Carscallen. He reflected that the latter would scarcely have picked a poor man to superintend the expenditure of his investment.

CHAPTER XV

"MEET MISS MAGUIRE"

ON the evening of his return Ogilvie entered the dining room somewhat late. To his surprise, across the table from his usual place sat a red-haired young woman in whom he recognized Carscallen's young secretary. Beside her was seated the little girl, a dark, frail child, plainly shy amid new surroundings.

"Mr. Ogilvie," said Mrs. Tarbox in the accepted formula of Garrett's Bay, "meet Miss Maguire."

The red-haired girl bowed, smiling slightly.

"I think I have met Mr. Ogilvie before."

But Ogilvie was staring at her with a sudden, new interest. His eyes, narrowed as in an effort of memory, searched her face.

"Do you mean in Carscallen's office?" he asked.

"And we have passed each other on the street several times. This is my little niece, Kitty, Mr. Ogilvie."

The child's big, dark eyes, appraised her new acquaintance.

"'Kitty?'" Ogilvie repeated with strong interrogation.

"Her name is Kathleen. 'Kitty' for short."

Ogilvie looked straight into Miss Maguire's steady, blue eyes. They met his, calmly, firmly.

"Kitty," he said, "you and I are going to be good friends, aren't we?" The child looked at her aunt for guidance.

"I don't know," she replied shyly.

"She doesn't make friends easily," said Miss Maguire. "But she won't annoy you, Mr. Ogilvie. She's very quiet."

"I don't make friends so easily myself," said Ogilvie. "But when I do, I don't forget them."

The observation seemed to carry a special application, but Miss Maguire merely smiled politely, and shortly left the table with her niece. Ogilvie continued his meal mechanically, alone, save for Mrs. Tarbox. But he was not thinking of the excellent food, which he barely tasted. He was thinking, and in a new light, of this red-haired girl, this Miss Maguire.

Maguire! His mind went back a dozen years, to a distant river, an autumn afternoon after a rain, to a slim, red-headed girl of sixteen, fishing; to the girl's father, the crippled old logger, Dan Maguire, in his prime known as the "Big Rust"—from his red mane; to the elder sister, Kitty, the golden-haired, feather-headed beauty; to the big riverman and bad actor, Flynn, who had been Kitty's lover, and who had trailed him, Ogilvie, thirty miles, hounding him through the bush with intent to rob him of the pay roll of old Peter McLachlin.

But here was a Miss Maguire, the red-haired, efficient secretary of Carscallen, who had a niece named "Kitty." He had not connected the red-haired girl with the past until he had heard her name, but now he was sure. Changed as she was from the frank, uneducated tomboy of a bygone day, he had no doubt of her identity. Also he was sure she had recognized him. But why was she apparently reluctant to admit it?

What had happened in the intervening years? Where was the crippled giant, the Big Rust? Where was the golden-haired Kitty, who might be the mother of this child? But as for Flynn, riverman and desperado, he had met him very recently, changed, indeed, by the years but perfectly recognizable; he had been the third man with Stevens, the engineer.

He became aware that Mrs. Tarbox was speaking.

"You'll be surprised at me takin' in a woman

boarder after what I said, but she was boardin' with a lady friend of mine who was goin' away and sellin' her house. So my friend come to me and give her a good character—I don't mean a moral character, but a boarder's character—and I seen her for myself and had a talk with her, and here she is. I hope you don't mind."

"No, of course not. Why should I?"

"Well, I wasn't sure," said Mrs. Tarbox with relief. "She's in Carscallen's office. You've met her there, from what she said."

"Yes, I've met her there. I didn't know her name."

"You think you've met her somewheres else, too," Mrs. Tarbox pursued shrewdly. "Now, if you had, wouldn't it be funny?"

"Very funny," Ogilvie assented absently.

He left the loquacious Mrs. Tarbox and went out on the veranda. Miss Maguire was sitting alone in the farthest corner, her hands on her lap, her head thrown back watching distant clouds which threatened storm. He went directly to her.

"May I sit down and talk to you?" he asked.

"Of course. Do you think we shall have a storm?"

"Hang the storm!" said Ogilvie. "You are Noreen Maguire. Don't you remember me?"

"Yes, I remember you," she admitted.

"Then why on earth didn't you say so?" Ogilvie demanded. "I didn't know you till I heard your name to-night—heard the little girl's name. But you knew me that day in Carscallen's office. That's a nice way to treat an old friend!"

"I didn't know whether you'd care to revive an old acquaintanceship."

"Care?" Ogilvie exclaimed. "Good Lord! Do you think I've forgotten how good you and your father were to me? You used to write me that first winter in the shanties. I have those letters yet."

"I wish you'd destroy them. They were very

crude, impossible letters. I'm ashamed of them now."

"They were and are perfectly good letters from a perfectly good, natural girl."

"From an utterly uneducated little tomboy. I've changed a good deal since then. So have you."

"I haven't changed so much that I forget that old friendship," said Ogilvie. "Noreen——"

"I am not that to anybody here, Mr. Ogilvie."

"'Miss Maguire,' then. I want to hear what's happened in all these years. Tell me about yourself."

"But I'm not very interesting. I work, make a living. We'd better talk about you—your business, if you like. I can understand that sort of thing now."

"I don't want to talk about my business. I want to talk about you—about old times."

"But suppose I don't want to?"

"Then I suppose that settles it," he admitted ruefully. "I don't understand you at all. You've changed utterly."

"We've both changed. It couldn't be otherwise."

"It could be a whole lot otherwise if you'd have it that way," Ogilvie growled. "I've got a lot of the boy you used to know left down inside me. Why do you insist on this stand-off stuff? Why can't you be the girl I knew and liked so much back in old Corktown? Why can't you be natural?"

"I'm perfectly natural," Miss Maguire declared with some irritation. "Do you want me to pretend that I'm still a raw little girl of sixteen?"

Ogilvie considered her for a moment.

"I'm not suggesting that you should kiss me again to see what it feels like," he said deliberately. The girl's face flamed scarlet.

"So you remember that idiotic act of a village tomboy! Do you think I like to be reminded of it? Is that your idea of talking over old times?"

"Whether you like to be reminded of it or not I

like to think of it," said Ogilvie. She half turned in her chair to face him, eying him with level hostility.

"Perhaps," she said, "you like to think of it as an early conquest. Do you? I kissed you twelve years ago, when I was a half-grown girl who had fought boys who wanted to kiss her, just to find out how it felt to kiss a boy who didn't want to be kissed. You were quite indifferent then, even embarrassed, as I remember. Now you seem to have developed sentimental recollections. Would you like to kiss me now, just for old friendship's sake, if I gave you a little encouragement? Is that what your talk of old times is intended to lead up to, Mr. Ogilvie?"

Ogilvie had deliberately tried to shake her out of her reserve by making her angry. Now, under the lash of her insinuation his own face reddened.

"It is not," he returned. "I don't want to kiss you. I wouldn't kiss you on a bet."

"You are trying to make me angry," she decided, controlling herself with visible effort. "Now, I wonder why? I'm not very nice when I'm angry, Mr. Ogilvie. You might infer that from what you knew of me as a girl."

"If I can dig up some of the girl I used to know, I'll take the consequences of the resurrection," Ogilvie told her. "You used to be a good little scout. Can't you see I want to be friendly? I don't want to kiss you, or call you by your first name, unless you want it that way—or hold your hand, or anything like that. I want to meet you as an old friend, who liked you and your father, and one to whom you showed a good deal of kindness which I will never forget. Why don't you take me on that basis? Will you tell me that?"

She considered him gravely for some moments, and to his surprise he saw that her clear, blue eyes had become misty.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I didn't mean to——"

"No, no, it's all right. I—I'm a fool, I suppose.

You won't understand. But I've had a hard row to hoe. I've had to check myself, check my natural impulses. Friends! Why, I long for friends. I always did. But I found I couldn't afford to have them—men friends."

"Nonsense!" Ogilvie growled.

"It isn't. I've had to work my way up, to key myself to concert pitch. I've had no time for friends. When I got my first job, a good many years ago, I was as eagerly friendly as a puppy, just as playful, and just as ignorant of what would hurt and what wouldn't. The result was that I was 'sister' and 'kid' to every one in the office, my employer included. You see, the men I had known all my life were rough and hard in a good many ways, but that was the worst of them.

"My employer was a nice, friendly man. He used to talk to me in a nice, friendly way when he was dictating letters. Now and then he'd give me a box of candy when I'd done extra work, and I'd share it with the other girls. I didn't know the talk that was going on behind my back.

"Yes, I was as innocent and silly as that. I didn't mind when he began to pat me on the shoulder and tell me I had nice, blue eyes. I rather liked it, because he had a daughter almost my own age. Innocent kid, you see. Then there was an occasion when I hit my friendly employer in the face—I didn't slap; I *hit,* as I used to hit the boys in Corktown when they tried to kiss me—and I walked out of that office and never came back. Do I need to speak plainer than that?"

"No," said Ogilvie.

"Well, then, I did some thinking, and when I got my next job I was 'Miss Maguire.' And that's what I've been ever since. I've trained myself to an impersonal sort of office manner, forced myself to it, kept it up out of the office for fear I wouldn't in it. Now I think it's my natural manner."

"No, it isn't. You can drop it with me."

"No. You're in business here, you have business relations with Mr. Carscallen, we are living under the same roof. I know these little towns. Gossip! Heavens, it's their middle name!"

"Even gossip has to have something to work on. The implication isn't fair to me."

"To you? You can stand it. What do you care? Heaven may protect the working girl, but I never noticed it."

"Well, I'm no wicked duke, no Don Juan. I'm a plain logger, with troubles of my own. Also I'm lonely."

"So am I," she admitted wistfully. "There are times when I simply ache to have somebody to talk to."

"Then let's talk," said Ogilvie. He was silent for a moment, his eyes half closed. "I know a place," he said, "where they jump clear of the water for the fly."

"Don't," she said; "don't talk about it! I haven't wet a fly for two years. Then I took little Kitty and went to a lake where there was no one within twenty miles. We camped there—just the two of us. I—I wore a bathing suit all day."

"Tell me about the youngster," said Ogilvie. "I suppose she's Kitty's girl?" Noreen seemed to hesitate momentarily.

"Yes, she's Kitty's girl."

"And Kitty?"

"She is dead."

"Too bad," said Ogilvie with sympathy. "The child seems a nice little kid. What's her other name?"

Noreen was silent so long that he looked at her inquiringly.

"You may as well know," she said at last. "Her other name is—Maguire!"

Ogilvie did not comprehend immediately. When he did he said gently: "I'm sorry, Noreen. The poor girl! It's too bad."

Noreen continued: "At the time of her death she was known as 'Mrs. Maguire.' She had been living alone with the child, doing odd jobs, sewing, washing. Nobody had ever seen her husband. She was supposed to be a widow, but I have not been able to establish any marriage."

"You tried to establish her marriage to Flynn?"

"Yes. I still think she married him, or thought she did, and he tired of her and deserted her."

"You've never seen Flynn—to ask him?"

"Never. He disappeared as completely as she did. That might point either way. If he is the child's father, it is better that she shouldn't know him."

"Some day she'll have to be told. She'll ask."

"Oh, I suppose so. But that's years ahead. Why worry about it? Meanwhile, her childhood will be as happy as I can make it. One never knows what will happen. She—she isn't very strong."

There was a slight break in her voice. Looking at her Ogilvie saw that the story had been hard to tell. She shared the fierce pride of her father, the Big Rust, hiding a tender heart beneath a cold exterior, reserved with all the reservation of pride.

He decided to say nothing to her of his recognition of Flynn that spring. What would be the use? He himself had a score to settle if the chance ever occurred. Then he would add interest for the dead Kitty Maguire, for the living one, for the Big Rust. He shifted the conversation to other topics, told of his own affairs, finding that she followed him closely, understandingly.

"You say that this timber property was held in trust," she observed. "Who really owned it—who owned it originally, do you know?"

"No. The property was bought in years ago by some firm of country lawyers acting for an undisclosed client. Then a trust was created. The deed didn't set out the disposition of the proceeds of sale, and didn't name the beneficiaries. It merely

referred specifically to some other instrument which presumably covered that."

"You didn't inquire? You weren't curious?"

"All I was concerned with was that the trust company could give a good title."

"If the property is so valuable somebody must have had foresight."

"Somebody had a white elephant," said Ogilvie. "Somebody bought what he couldn't handle or sell."

"But eventually it *was* sold, because you bought it."

"Looking at it in that way—yes. I suppose he will have some profit—if he is alive."

She was silent, watching the mounting storm clouds which were now nearly overhead. A gust of wind whirled a cloud of dust along the street in front of them. At any moment the storm might break.

"Mr. Carscallen told me he had bought three hundred of your shares. That's what proportion of your capitalization?"

"One fifth."

"You and Mr. Foss hold the controlling interest?"

"Yes."

"Do you hold jointly or severally?"

"Severally. We are on a fifty-fifty basis. Why?"

"Am I inquisitive? I've no special reason. I don't know Mr. Foss. What is he like?"

"He's a fine fellow—a good man in the woods. You ought to know his wife. Will you let me take you to make her acquaintance?"

"I'd be very glad. You have confidence in Mr. Foss?"

"Of course I have. You haven't heard anything to his discredit, I'm positive."

"No, nothing. I don't know him at all. I just——"

A reverberating clap of thunder drowned her

words. The wind struck solidly. The boughs of the maples bent and writhed in its grip. The air was filled with vagrant scraps of paper, leaves, flying débris. Behind the wind came the roar of marching rain. The girl sprang to her feet.

"I must go in," she exclaimed. "Kitty's afraid of thunder, and the rain will be driving in here in a minute."

She ran swiftly along the veranda. Ogilvie paused long enough to set the chairs bottoms up against the wall, and followed.

CHAPTER XVI

IN THE WOODS

WHILE Ogilvie was occupied with the company's affairs at Garrett's Bay, Foss was equally busy with what was to him the congenial work of the woods. There he was on the firing line, which he knew thoroughly.

When his tote road was sufficiently completed he began to clear the various small creeks of the logs and brush which impeded their flow, so that the waters should carry faster, and consequently with less seepage. He intended to clear even the thread-like tributary creeks and the springs themselves which fed them, to obtain every possible inch of water. But he counted principally on the melting snows of the spring break-up to create an adequate storage supply; for in that district the normal annual snowfall was heavy.

Then, too, there was the old, dry channel of the ancient watercourse to clean out, and three dams must be put in to secure constant floatage of logs with the water at his command. Besides these things, there was the logging road to build, logging camps back in the timber to construct, travois trails to swamp out, and skidways to be placed at convenient points.

Foss found Torrey, when he had thawed the ice of an initial coldness due to the "break" he had made on their first meeting, an invaluable lieutenant. A lifetime in the woods had made Torrey a master of his craft. Scarcely a situation could occur which had not its duplicate in his experience; the solution had not to be worked out, but merely to be brought out of his mental stock, fitted and applied.

He was cunning as an old fox, never wasting

effort but accomplishing his ends. He was sparing of words. Continuously he smoked an immensely long, flat-stemmed brier pipe, which appeared to be as necessary to his existence as an air tube to a diver. Though he exercised close supervision, he did so more by his presence than by appearing to note the amount of work done by each man. He seemed omnipresent.

No gang of two or three, slashing brush in a wilderness of creek and bog, knew what moment the old walking boss would emerge from the tangle, glance at their work with eye permanently asquint from years of staring across sunlit snows and water-rippled spaces, ask a perfunctory question or offer a word of advice and pass on. And neither did they know when he would return. To members of the crew inclined to "'soldier" on the job he seemed ubiquitous. Gradually narrow, clean channels, free of the rotten logs, roots, and overhanging brush of centuries, began to wind tortuously away into the forest and to the bases of the hills.

Asseltine had his own construction gang, a motley, pentecostal crew taken from a job of railway construction. Within themselves they comprised most of the nationalities and subnationalities of southern Europe. A literacy test would have excluded most of them. Asseltine's foreman was a Greek, a huge frame of a man who looked fat but was, in fact, immensely powerful, with the front of a polled Angus bull, a gold ring in his right ear, and a brigand's mustache. His first name was George. His surname presented difficulties to the Anglo-Saxon tongue. Foss shortened and simplified it to "Erysipelas," which it faintly resembled in sound. George Erysipelas was always civil, always obliging, and seemed competent. His gang stood in awe of him. But Foss, for some reason not apparent even to himself, did not like him.

The advent of the construction gang had been attended by friction between Asseltine and Torrey,

Foss chancing to be away at the time. Asseltine had supposed that his crew would eat and sleep in the same camp with the bush crew. But the shantymen had other views. Sprung mostly from Anglo-Saxon and Celtic stocks, they held others in contempt. Jimmy Bowes flatly refused to cook for the newcomers. Dougald St. Amand, who combined in himself the blood of the Scottish Highlands and the Gaul with a touch of Caughnawaga, being jostled accidentally by one Wasyll Prokopotz, knocked him cold. And Larry Fuljames, who weighed a scant hundred and fifty pounds in his driving boots, presented the gigantic Erysipelas with a gratuitous genealogy remarkable for its canine tinge. Torrey interposed with authority and sought Asseltine, to whom he explained the situation. Asseltine poohpoohed it.

"All right," said Torrey. "I've told you. If you ain't got a gang by morning don't blame me. My crew will take that gang of yours to pieces, if you don't fix up a separate camp."

"I'll fire the first man that starts anything," Asseltine snapped.

"You won't fire any of my crew," Torrey told him positively. "I do all that myself."

"We'll see about that," Asseltine retorted angrily. "When Mr. Foss isn't here, I'm in charge. Understand, Torrey!"

"You ain't in charge of my work," said Torrey, "nor of my crew. If you want to fire anybody you can start with me and see how you make out."

Asseltine knew he could not fire Torrey, and the knowledge made him angrier. But on reflection he swallowed his spleen and gave orders for the construction of a separate camp. Thereafter things jogged along well enough. The lumberjacks had no objection to the other crew's presence—at a reasonable distance. But Asseltine had it in for Torrey.

Most of Torrey's men were picked up around Garrett's Bay and at other points where during the

dull season lumberjacks were wont to congregate. Thus one day Foss interviewed half a dozen men who had heard of the job and come out on the chance of employment. The last of these was a well-built man of late middle age, with a somewhat reddened but humorous eye, and from the appearance of his garments up against the disagreeable necessity of working.

"What do you do?" Foss asked.

"Mostly annything," the applicant replied modestly with an accent which revealed Milesian extraction.

"All that?" said Foss dryly. The other grinned.

"I'm a cant-hook man and a riverman. Ye can see I'm not a young felly, an' I may not be as spry as I used to be, but I'm wort' me pay an' grub if so be ye want hands."

"All right," said Foss, recognizing an old hand. "Report to Torrey." The applicant's hat, which he had been holding in his hands, dropped to the floor.

"Who did ye say, sor?"

"Torrey—the foreman."

"That'd not be ould Fred Torrey, would it, sor?"

"That's the identical," Foss admitted. "You've worked for him before, have you?"

"Have I?" the man grinned. "You ask him does he know Mike Callahan. Sure he was me boss in t'ree camps, the last bein' ould Pether McLachlin's, the time he got hurted be rowlin' logs, an' that's twelve years gone."

"Is that so?" said Foss with interest. "Then you'll know Mr. Ogilvie, my partner."

"I do not mind the name," said Mr. Callahan. "I never worked for no Ogilvies. Where was his camps, sor?"

"He didn't have any. He kept time and tended van in one of McLachlin's camps where Torrey was foreman."

"What?" cried Mr. Callahan. "Th' red-headed kid that shtud off that divil of a Jim Flynn an' th'

rest wid a rifle when Torrey was hurted an' th' crew run a dom four-flush of a foreman out of th' woods—th' kid that saved McLachlin's pay roll for him? Ye don't tell me this Ogilvie's him?"

"Seems to be," said Foss. "But he never told me about standing off anybody."

"Then it's him," Mr. Callahan deduced. "A close-mouthed young divil he was, givin' ye 'yes' or 'no' civil enough when ye axed him, an' axin' ye questions, maybe, but tellin' ye nawthin' himself. An' red as a fox, an' all. Is that him?"

"To a knock-down," Foss grinned.

"I was wid him, plasthered dhrunk on th' thrain goin' up to that first job of his," Mr. Callahan reflected. "An' now I'm workin' f'r him in his camps! Well, well! ain't it th' hell of a little worruld?"

He reported to Torrey, who welcomed his old hand cordially, because he liked him and for old time's sake. But looking him over after twelve years, he shook his head.

"You're doing no better for yourself, Mike. A rolling stone gathers no moss."

"I am not wishful f'r to be a mossback," Mr. Callahan replied. "Annyways they say 'tis th' rovin' bee that gets the most honey. F'r why should I deny meself me fun?"

"For your old age," Torrey told him. "We're not young, Mike, either of us. Some day you won't be able to work in the woods." The half-mocking smile left Mr. Callahan's face.

The careless old logger lugged his "turkey" into the bunk house, selected a double-bitted ax and helve, ground down the former and fined down the latter to his notions, and went to swamping, in which he was still as efficient as younger men.

Foss, absorbed in his work and continually planning more, visited home at rare intervals. With the clearing out of the creeks there was a rise in the levels of the lakes. At Asseltine's request he stopped that work lest it should interfere with the

initial construction of the dam, and turned to the construction of a logging road and clearing out the old creek bed.

The financial end was his partner's. Nevertheless Foss was alarmed and oppressed by what he knew of the cost of operations, the continual demands for materials, repairs, team feed, supplies of all kinds. They had been forced to purchase a portable sawmill to obtain planking for the various dams and chutes. It was a choice between doing so or turning them out laboriously by hand, and the former course seemed the cheaper. When the mill came some parts had been broken in transit. This meant more delay.

Then trouble developed in Asseltine's construction gang. Half the men threw down their tools. George Erysipelas, shrugging mighty shoulders, explained to the indignant Foss:

"It is that a long time ago there was a war, and these mans' grandfather fight on both sides and steal each other's cows and wives."

"Then they ought to be related," Foss commented scathingly. "Has this war news just got around to them? They've been working together all right."

"They have just remember," said George Erysipelas. "It is a blood feud, sir." Foss damned their blood and all feuds comprehensively.

"If they want to fight it out," he said with irony, "I'll give them a day off with pay, and furnish axes for both sides. I'd like to see them kill each other."

"They do not want to fight," the foreman explained seriously. "They have too much despise the both for the each to do the honor of fight. The half that have the most despise, they quit. If they stay, the others quit."

Foss could do nothing. He understood lumberjacks, men of his own race, independent to insolence, fearless, formidable, swift with oath and blow, ready to settle any grudge by a finish fight; but these aliens with their broad, flat faces, piglike

eyes, slow, clumsy though powerful bodies, and age-old ingrained beliefs and prejudices, he did not understand. Their ideas were fixed, ineradicable, descending from generation to generation living in the same village, their views as narrow and circumscribed as their surroundings.

And these were the kind that a national mania for growth and population imported! Imported by the shipload, by the thousand, by the million! Would they be absorbed, or themselves absorb? Foss wondered vaguely. But it irked him that George Erysipelas was apparently blameless in the matter, for without any reason his dislike of the foreman had increased.

"Well, see that the worst half of 'em do the quitting—if there is a worst half," he growled. So the half that had "the most despise" quit, and work suffered while others whose ancestors had not taken liberties with other men's cows and wives were brought in.

CHAPTER XVII

FOSS' HUNCH

SHORTLY after these events Ogilvie came out to have a look at the work, and Foss spoke the thought which was in his mind.

"It's not going ahead as fast as I'd like. And the whole thing must be costing us a devil of a lot."

Ogilvie nodded soberly. "It is. It's going away over our original estimate. Just what seems to be the trouble, Jack?"

"I don't know," Foss admitted. "The bush work is all right. You know Torrey. But Asseltine isn't getting ahead, and I can't tell you why, either. I've watched his gang and they don't loaf—at least not so's you'd notice it. Asseltine seems to be on the job. I guess he has to have the things he says he has to, and, of course, he's been delayed different ways. We have to make allowance for that. But I wish I could see more results."

"There's often a lot of preliminary work on a job that doesn't show," said Ogilvie. "Then, all of a sudden, it does."

"Well, I hope this does," said Foss. "It's the money that worries me, Archie. We've bitten off a devil of a mouthful."

"We'll chew it somehow," Ogilvie encouraged him. "I didn't want to, but I guess we'll have to sell the rest of our treasury stock."

He went over the work by himself, as was his custom. The bush end was well in hand, but he, too, was disappointed in Asseltine's. So far as he could see it was good work, but the old trouble continued. It was too good for the job, too expensive, a five-hundred-dollar saddle on a thirty-dollar

horse. And yet it was hard to find fault with admittedly good and careful construction.

He watched the work of the gang. There had been an accident to the pile driver, but otherwise the work was proceeding. The men were not loafing. He could make no criticism.

He went up the line to a gravel pit in a sidehill beyond the dam, ascended the hill, and came out at a point where, himself unseen, he could watch the loading of the dump wagons. He had vetoed Asseltine's request for a small steam shovel, so that the loading was being done by hand. The teamsters bringing up empties spotted them by the gravel, unhooked and hooked up again to the first full wagon available. Then the shovelers fell back to a standing empty.

A hot sun beat down upon the sweating men and horses. The shovelers bent, half straightened and threw, over and over, monotonously, like automatons. The teamsters, aristocrats of labor, if they could not find a full wagon, hooked to one being filled, and sat idly, smoking.

As Ogilvie stood watching the scene the big foreman, George Erysipelas, entered the pit. He was bareheaded, his tangled black thatch apparently affording sufficient protection from the sun. The bosom of his shirt was wide open, showing his vast chest, bulging with muscle, mossy with black hair; its sleeves were rolled high, revealing huge, hairy, powerfully muscled arms. For all his bulk he moved lightly amid the shifting gravel, with a balancing, foot-gripping action which is the peculiar property of the great felines and very active strong men.

He came to a halt behind a man who appeared to be plying a shovel industriously. The man straightened and turned to face the foreman. Standing erect he was even taller than the latter, a hulking figure of huge bulk and long, gorillalike arms. Ogilvie could not hear what passed, but the shoveler

gesticulated violently. Suddenly he swung his implement above his head and struck at the foreman.

The latter avoided the steel blade with a backward spring light as the bound of a lynx. Immediately he began to circle his assailant, on the balls of his feet, his knees bent, his arms partially extended and wide of his body. The man with the shovel stood flatfooted, turning slowly, the heavy tool aloft oscillating slightly to the play of his wrists as a batter flexes them while awaiting a pitcher's delivery.

Ogilvie did not consider himself called upon to interfere. He was curious to see the outcome. The gang suspended work, watching.

The foreman feinted a rush. He leaped in and out again as the steel blade, bright with the scouring of gravel, hissed in a downward stroke, and before its owner could recover to striking position he was inside its swing. Dropping his weapon the shoveler caught the foreman by the waist. His grasp fastened on the shirt, ripping the thin fabric so that it dangled in halves, supported merely by the sleeves and neckband, revealing a naked torso banded and ridged and plastered with muscles which rose and fell and crept and tautened with every shift of posture.

Their feet dug hard in the gravel, and for a moment the big shoveler seemed to be holding his opponent. But all the time the foreman's hands were shifting, baffling the other's purpose, intent on one of their own; pawing, patting, searching. Then came a quick flurry, a confused mêlée and the foreman was behind his opponent, his left forearm beneath his chin, his left wrist locked in his right hand. It was a variety of the deadly strangle, and as George Erysipelas' arms jerked, the body of the shoveler jerked also in response as a ripple runs down a rope, and his knees sagged weakly. Then the foreman relinquished his grasp and, seizing his man by the back of the neck, began to kick him in the direction of camp.

The man ran stumblingly, his hands to his throat. Out of range he looked around, shaking his arms in the air, cursing, but when the foreman took a step in his direction he went hurriedly.

George Erysipelas looked up and saw Ogilvie who had advanced to the edge of the pit. Immediately he bowed, with a deprecatory gesture, pulling the fragments of his shirt around him. Ogilvie beckoned and the foreman joined him.

"What was the trouble?" Ogilvie asked.

"The man was a loafer," Erysipelas replied. "He would not work."

"He seemed to be working all right. I was looking at him."

George spread his big hands. "He was not filling the shovel. So much, like on a spoon, he picked up. And a trouble maker in the camp. Always of less work and more money he talked, and how much you and Meester Foss make from the work of the men. For a long time I watch him, and to-day I give him the hell of the hard call-down. Then you see he swings at me with his shovel."

Ogilvie found the explanation reasonable. It was simply a case of a big, ignorant brute with a few cant phrases of a soap-box orator or the quack literature of agitating labor propagandists lodged in his slow brain, gradually fermenting! He nodded, scrutinizing the foreman.

"Fire him. You handled him pretty fast. That strangle—— Are you a wrestler?"

The foreman smiled with a flash of white teeth and a negative motion of the head.

"Oh, not to say a wrestler. A little knowledge I have—yes—but very little. That feller he knew nothing, but the strength like a bull."

"You are pretty strong yourself."

The foreman shrugged his massive shoulders.

"Oh, yes, I am strong. But there are many stronger men."

Modest, Ogilvie reflected as he left the gravel pit.

He found his partner just in from the bush, hot and tired, going to the farthest lake for a swim. He went with him. As they removed their garments he told him of how the foreman had handled the trouble maker. Foss grunted, unlacing his boots.

"That George is a big, husky devil." He began on the other boot. "I wonder," he said speculatively, "whether I could handle him myself, if I had to."

"I'd say he was too heavy and strong, and likely knows too much about the game for you," said Ogilvie. "He's away bigger than you are. But I don't know any reason why you should ever have to handle him. Do you?"

"No-o," Foss replied slowly, standing up to draw off his shirt, "no, not unless you believe in hunches. Do you ever have 'em? Do you ever run across a man, and when you look him in the eye something inside you says: 'Well, my buck, I don't like you, and you don't like me, and some day when the play comes up right we're going to it?' "

Oddly, as Foss spoke, Ogilvie thought of Carscallen. On meeting him first he had experienced a feeling of hostility. But it had been momentary.

"Rats!" he commented. "If a fellow scrapped with everybody he didn't like he'd have his hands full. Anyway, that George is too husky for you."

Foss grunted again, and bending, drew his shirt over his head. He stood up stripped, ready for the water.

Ogilvie, who had never seen his partner's body before, whistled softly in surprise. For Foss' physical development was exceptional. His arms and shoulders and back were heavily muscled. His stomach was armored with corrugations of it. Bands of it curved his thighs, and the calves of his legs, which were slightly bowed, stood strongly outward.

"Why, Jack," said Ogilvie, "you're mighty well put up yourself."

Foss grinned. "Did you think I was a run-down anæmic, m' son?" In return he appraised his partner, now himself stripped. "You're in good shape, too. Light—but you're wiry. You'd give a man of your own weight quite a racket."

"He'd have to catch me first," said Ogilvie. "And I'm a darned good runner."

"Uh-huh," said Foss. "I can see you running. Ever do any scrapping?"

"No more than I could keep out of. Did you? I remember what your wife said about some fights the first night I was at your house."

"Well, you know how it is around a camp," Foss replied. "There's always some fellow that needs a licking. Maybe he has a little reputation. You trim him, and the word gets round that you're a fighter. Some darn fool brags that you can whip the best man of some other crew. That lands you in trouble, and you've got to take care of it or crawl.

"Then, when I got to be a camp boss, one time and another I've had to handle one or two fellows who thought they were bad. Fact is, Archie, at one time I was a sort of a fighting fool. I couldn't back up a little. Seemed as if I just had to go to it whenever anybody else was willing. It wasn't that I was quarrelsome. Oh, yes, I've done quite a bit of scrapping off and on. But I quit it long ago."

"Oh, of course," said Ogilvie with irony. "Witness your hunch about this George."

"It *is* funny when you come to think of it," Foss admitted. "I promised Millie I'd never have another scrap unless it was forced on me—unless it was a case of fight or eat dirt. But all the same I'd like to take a bird out of that big, greasy jeesler. And I've got a hunch I'm going to. He doesn't like me any more than I like him. I can see it in his eye—by the way he looks at me as if he was figuring out just where he'd like to land.

"If we were in the same camp—hands—we'd go

to it inside a week. Well, here we go!" He sprang high, straightened in the air, and entered the water in a clean dive. A few moments later his body shot waist-high from the water thirty feet from shore. "Come along, Archie!" he shouted joyously. "She's cold—but she's fine!"

Refreshed by their plunge in the spring water of the lake, they lay and smoked. Foss adverted to the progress of Asseltine's work.

"You've been prowling around quite a lot. How does it strike you?"

Ogilvie smoked for a full minute before replying.

"I don't know," he admitted. "The results don't show up for much, but the work is good. I've watched the gang, and they seem to be working all right."

"That's what I don't understand. They ought to do more. With a bush crew I'd gamble I'd do twice as much."

"They wouldn't do that class of work. I don't know what can be done about it, but I'll have another talk with Asseltine."

But Asseltine took the unassailable position that he could not, for the sake of his professional reputation, countenance slipshod construction, or work of which his judgment did not approve. If that were forced on him he would resign.

Ogilvie did not wish to force a resignation on these grounds, which would place him in a most unpleasant position when he came to sell more stock; and in a worse if by any chance cheaper and more hurried construction failed to hold. Asseltine presumably knew his own job, the technique of construction. So he contented himself with again urging the necessity of speed, and returned to Garrett's Bay.

CHAPTER XVIII

NOREEN AND LITTLE KITTY

AMID Ogilvie's business perplexities the renewal of his old if brief friendship with Noreen Maguire progressed fitfully. For a time she appeared to regret the confidence she had made, avoiding him, treating him as a new and casual acquaintance. That wore off, and by degrees they got upon a footing of greater intimacy. He found that the girl he had known was intact beneath the cool, business-like exterior; and he loved to penetrate this shell, to produce a small eruption of the hot, primal lava which underlay it.

He had taken an early opportunity of making her acquainted with Millie Foss. From this acquaintance sprang a close friendship between the two young women. Little Kitty, too, found companions in the two Foss children—young Jack and Winnifred, better known as "Topsy." These speedily adopted Kitty's aunt, and hearing at secondhand of wonderful stories she knew, demanded the original versions.

Thus Ogilvie who had formed the habit of strolling out to his partner's home two or three evenings in each week, was apt to find Noreen romping on the lawn with the children, her hair flying in disorder, her dignity thrown to the winds; or later telling them a bedtime story of the wondrous adventures of Soganosh, the white boy, and Nitche, his little Indian brother—stories, she explained, which had come down to her from her father, who in his childhood had them of an ancient Mohawk known as "Billy Finger," in trust for succeeding generations.

To these marvelous tales Mrs. Foss and Ogilvie

listened gravely, watching the young eyes widen as their owners stepped boldly into the fairyland of romance, which childhood enters at will, but from which older folk, for their years and sins, are forever debarred. He found a special pleasure in the soft, low, crooning voice, its distinct, syllabic, throaty pronunciation of the musical, mouth-filling Indian composites; and he would listen as intently as the children to the red-haired priestess of their youthful gods, until Millie Foss, exclaiming that it was time all chicks were at roost, would sweep her two into the house, and little Kitty would cuddle into her aunt's arms.

Later they would go home together, through the dusk, the little girl between them holding a hand of each, for she had quite adopted Ogilvie. Sometimes he would carry her, for she was not strong, and tired easily in play with the younger but more rugged Foss children.

On one of these occasions they met Carscallen. He almost passed before he recognized them in the dusk, but when he did so, stopped abruptly. Obviously he was surprised, his action quite involuntary.

"I thought it was a happy family out for a stroll," he laughed. "This is the little niece I've heard you speak of, Miss Maguire?"

"Mr. Ogilvie spoils her very badly, Mr. Carscallen," Noreen replied.

"Well, I don't blame him," said Carscallen. "By the way, Miss Maguire, can you oblige me by being at the office half an hour earlier to-morrow morning. I'm going out of town and there are some things I want to clean up."

He raised his hat and went on. Noreen frowned.

"I wonder why he didn't tell me earlier?" she speculated.

"Perhaps he didn't know," said Ogilvie, who had a suspicion that Carscallen was merely covering an involuntary impulse which had made him halt.

"Is that man your boss, auntie?" Kitty asked.

"Yes. But you mustn't say 'boss.'"

"Is it a naughty word?" the child asked gravely.

"No, not naughty. Just not nice for little girls. Say 'employer.'"

"'Em-ploy-er,'" Kitty repeated. "It means 'boss,' but I mustn't say it. I'll remember. That's the man—I mean gentleman, you work for, auntie?"

"Yes," Noreen replied, smiling at Ogilvie.

"That's how you get the money to pay for all the things we have—from him?"

"Yes, dear."

"And if he didn't pay you we wouldn't have any money," Kitty pursued with elemental logic. Noreen laughed, glancing at Ogilvie.

"Not as bad as that, pet. If he didn't pay me, I'd work for somebody else, and we'd have the money just the same."

"Would it be just as good money, and just as much?"

"Just as good and just as much."

Kitty digested this information for a moment. "Then I wouldn't work for him any longer," she announced.

"You wouldn't!" her aunt exclaimed, laughing. "And why not, Miss Independence?"

"Because I don't like him," the little girl replied with finality.

"You mustn't say you don't like people, dear."

"Do I have to like them whether I do or not?" the puzzled Kitty queried. "Because if I don't I can't, can I?"

"Why don't you like Mr. Carscallen, Kittens?" Ogilvie queried.

"No," said Noreen. "You mustn't ask her questions like that. I want her to get these ridiculous dislikes on sight out of her head."

"Oh, let her answer," said Ogilvie. "It develops reasoning power to be forced to justify a mental

impression. Let's see what's going on in the little head. Why don't you like him, Kittens?"

"I don't know," the little girl puzzled. "I guess I just don't. I like you, but I don't like him."

"Why do you like me?"

"I like you because you like Aunt Noreen and she likes you," Kitty decided promptly.

Noreen interrupted: "Don't ask her any more questions."

"'Out of the mouths of babes,'" said Ogilvie. "That's a mighty good reason, and absolutely true —or I hope so. But why don't you like the other fellow, Kittens?"

"I don't know," the child repeated. "He likes auntie, too, but not the way you do. More as if she was something nice to—to eat. I can't es-plain it."

Noreen, red as her own hair, interposed sharply.

"Not one word more, Kitty, about Mr. Carscallen, now or at any other time. Do you understand me?"

"Don't scold her," said Ogilvie as the child's fingers closed on his in hurt surprise. "Go for me if you like."

"I asked you not to question her. You deliberately led her on to say—what she did say."

"Well, she didn't say so much," Ogilvie defended. "Carscallen can't eat you, even if he wants to."

"You know the implication of that, translated into adult speech. She didn't know, but you do. And you dare to repeat it to me!"

"But——" Ogilvie began.

"If you say one word more about it, make one more allusion to it, remind me of it by so much as a glance or a smile, I'll leave Mrs. Tarbox's to-morrow, and I'll never speak to you again!" she flamed.

"Good Lord! what a temper you have!" Ogilvie protested. "What's the use of getting hot about nothing. Let's forget it."

But neither of them forgot it. Ogilvie wondered

what was at the bottom of Noreen's sudden flare-up. Had Carscallen been trying to flirt with her? Scarcely, for she would have left his office without hesitation. Could it be possible that beneath her impersonal office manner she was fond of her employer? He could not decide. In any event Noreen now avoided him, erecting a barrier of cool politeness. When she visited Mrs. Foss she came and went alone, exhibiting an unmistakable preference for her own company.

But Ogilvie did not discontinue his own visits because of that. He strolled out as usual once or twice a week. On one of these occasions he found Millie Foss and Noreen alone upon the veranda. The children had gone to bed. Ogilvie drew up a chair and lit a cigar, as was his custom. But he was aware of what he had never experienced there before—a sense of constraint. Mrs. Foss made conversation bravely, but Noreen contributed little. The periods of silence were not the easy silences of intimacy but the awkward silences of acquaintance. Through one of these came a sleepy wail of distress from one of the Foss youngsters upstairs.

"Let me go," said Noreen as Mrs. Foss rose. "Sit still, Millie. I'll see what's wanted."

Mrs. Foss sighed heavily as Noreen vanished into the darkened interior of the house.

"What's the matter?" Ogilvie asked.

"I wish I knew," Mrs. Foss returned. "Why on earth didn't you talk or try to? Why wouldn't she? I felt as if we were all strangers. What's the trouble between you two, anyway? Have you quarreled?"

"Now, see here, Mrs. Jack," said Ogilvie, "I hope you don't mean to imply something which doesn't exist."

"Well, if it doesn't, it ought to," Mrs. Foss asserted. "I've never asked any questions, and I don't know whether anything is settled or not yet,

but I sort of took it for granted that things would work out that way eventually. What more do you want? She's a nice girl, sweet-tempered——"

"Sweet-tempered? Heavens!" Ogilvie exclaimed. "She blows up about nothing like old powder."

"So you *have* quarreled," Millie Foss deduced. "And being the woman naturally she's to blame. Oh, of course! Do you know you're red-headed yourself?"

"I may be," Ogilvie admitted, "but in this case I'm just a darned meek and lowly worm. I haven't even turned. I haven't said or done anything to offend any reasonable being."

"Meaning that she's unreasonable. Oh, I suppose you'll both get over it some day."

"Nothing to get over, as far as I'm concerned," Ogilvie growled.

"See here, young man," said Millie Foss, "tell me in confidence—do you want to marry her or don't you?"

"Marry her?" Ogilvie exclaimed. "Of course I don't. I don't want to marry anybody. Can't I be civil to a girl I knew when I was a kid without being accused of matrimonial designs?"

"Well, why don't you want to marry her?" Mrs. Foss pursued. "Didn't it ever occur to you? You think it over. She's as fine a girl as you'll ever find, clever, independent, maybe not exactly pretty but very nice looking, healthy, good temp——"

"She isn't!" Ogilvie interrupted. "There you go again. I tell you she's got a temper like a meat ax."

"Oh, dear!" Millie Foss sighed. "I just know your children will be little terrors."

"Children!" Ogilvie exclaimed. "Good Lord! don't I tell you I'm not thinking of marrying any more than she is."

"How do you know what she's thinking about? Did you ever ask her?"

"Ask her? If she was thinking of marrying me? To marry me? You bet I didn't."

"Well, if you don't somebody else will," Mrs. Foss warned him.

"Somebody has my sympathy, then," Ogilvie returned. "I haven't the remotest intention of marrying her, even if she'd marry me, which she wouldn't. I've troubles enough already."

In the silence which followed this ultimatum Noreen's voice behind them said: "I assure you, Millie, I haven't the least desire to add to Mr. Ogilvie's troubles."

Ogilvie, though his nerves were ordinarily steady, jumped. Mrs. Foss gasped.

"Noreen Maguire, I thought you were upstairs!"

"I didn't intend to listen, but your words were quite distinct as I came down the hall. Now, frankly, Millie, have I ever said or done anything which could be construed as indicating a desire to marry Mr. Ogilvie?"

"No," the embarrassed Mrs. Foss returned candidly.

"Then why on earth should you assume it?" Noreen demanded.

"My dear," Mrs. Foss replied contritely, "I'm more sorry than I can tell you. I apologize for everything I said. But all the same," she concluded, "I maintain that I was giving him very good advice."

"The inference was that I was waiting to be asked, and that wasn't fair to me. Naturally poor Mr. Ogilvie was alarmed—to the point of sympathy with any one unlucky enough to marry me."

"I offer you a sincere apology for my words," said Ogilvie stiffly. "That's all I can do."

"I was thrown at your head, and you were justified in throwing me back. Perhaps you didn't mean just what you said. I rather hope not."

"I didn't," said Ogilvie. "I didn't mean it at all, and I think you know it. It was a rotten thing

to say—but it was one of the things that jerked out because they seem to come pat, if you get what I mean."

"Yes, I understand," she nodded. "And you were right about one thing. I've got a quick temper. But I hope I have some sense, and I'm not going to be offended or anything silly." She smiled at Mrs. Foss. "You see, dear, Mr. Ogilvie and I have no matrimonial designs on each other. We are very good friends most of the time, and we are quite satisfied with that relation. So do let it go at that. And now I must go home."

"May I go with you?" Ogilvie asked.

"Not this time. It never occurred to me before, but possibly other people may have Millie's ridiculous idea."

Mrs. Foss and Ogilvie looked after her as she disappeared in the darkness.

"And now I've been and gone and done it," said the former. "She's hurt—all through—and she's carrying it off like the kind, big-hearted girl she is. She did her best to let me down easy, but I never felt so ashamed of anything in my life—never. And then it will delay things so."

"Delay?" Ogilvie puzzled. Mrs. Foss nodded.

"Of course. It will be ever so long before you're married now."

"Great Scott!" Ogilvie ejaculated with irritation. "Will nothing get that absurd idea out of your head? Don't I tell you I have enough troubles already? If you knew what I'm up against you'd know I couldn't think of getting married."

"Business?" Mrs. Foss queried. "I'm sorry. Does Jack know?"

"In a general way. It's up to me, not to him. He has his own difficulties. The financial end is my lookout."

"Tell me about it," Millie Foss suggested.

Ogilvie did so. He had sounded several men in

advance of a further stock issue, and their attitude had not been encouraging.

"But we'll pull through," he predicted, "somehow. Don't you worry. When we turn the corner you and Jack and the kiddies will be on Easy Street for the rest of your lives."

"It sounds too good to be true," Mrs. Foss returned a trifle wistfully. "We have always just scraped along. We've been comfortable enough, and thank Heaven we haven't expensive tastes, and we've had good health, but all the same we've just scraped. It would be wonderful to have real money—to afford a few luxuries without pinching somewhere to pay for them."

"If this comes through all right, you'll have it. Then the firm of Ogilvie & Foss will make more. He's just the partner I've wanted."

"I think you're the partner he needs, too," Mrs. Foss smiled. "He isn't a business man, and he's timid—that way." She laughed. "I don't suppose he ever told you, but the first night he brought you home, when you proposed to go into business with him, he asked me if I thought you were straight."

Ogilvie grinned. "I wondered if he was. I gather that you approved of me. But you didn't know me."

"Oh, yes, I did."

"You'd never seen me before."

"I didn't need to. When you sat down little Jack came and leaned against your knee, and Topsy took your hand and snuggled up to you. So then I knew you were all right."

"For Heaven's sake!" Ogilvie exclaimed. "What a reason!"

"It's perfectly good reason," Millie Foss maintained. "When you and Noreen——"

"Good night!" Ogilvie cried, seizing his hat. "If I stay any longer I'll be a grandfather!"

CHAPTER XIX

BUSINESS WORRIES

IN speaking to Mrs. Foss, Ogilvie had, to a large extent, glossed over the financial perplexities with which he was confronted. The work of construction still absorbed money as a blotter sops up ink, continually swallowing it with apparently insatiable appetite. The winter was coming on, and logging operations must be begun, which meant a larger crew and pay roll, together with further supplies of all kinds. It was, therefore, essential to sell more stock, though the prospects of doing so, as he had ascertained by tentative inquiries, were not of the brightest. Before calling the necessary meeting to authorize the sale of the remaining treasury shares, he explained the situation to Carscallen.

Carscallen was surprised and inclined to be critical. He pointed out that Lefevre's estimate of cost was being largely exceeded, and asked why. Ogilvie replied that they had had a number of unforeseen expenses. He instanced items. Carscallen thought that these should have been considered in the estimate. He blamed Lefevre for lack of foresight, for not knowing his business.

"I'm not inclined to blame him," said Ogilvie. "He made his estimate on his own ideas of construction, which Foss would have carried out. But we got another engineer with different ideas, who is carrying them out."

"Well, Asseltine is a competent man. He does good work."

"I don't say his work is bad. But I do say it's too expensive for the job, and too slow. Without him we'd have put in something good enough, in half the time and for half the money."

"So that I'm really responsible for the extra cost by recommending Asseltine," Carscallen deduced.

"Indirectly you are," said Ogilvie, "though that wasn't in my mind. What is, is that such expensive work isn't necessary."

"Well, why didn't you tell him so?"

"I did. He's modified his original ideas, and says he is now giving us only what is necessary for security. He says he won't risk his reputation by flimsy construction."

"I want nothing to do with the active management of the business," said Carscallen. "I told you that before. I leave that entirely to you and Foss. If you want another man, get him. But for my part I'd rather put up a little more money than take a chance on cheap construction and the water going out just when we need it."

Again Ogilvie had to admit that from the standpoint of the careful, conservative, business man Carscallen was right. He had invested heavily, he had left everything to them, he had never questioned anything they had done. His present criticism was fair.

"When you speak of spending money," said Ogilvie, "that involves raising it."

"Well, that's what treasury stock's for," Carscallen returned.

"Do you want any more yourself?" Ogilvie asked bluntly. Carscallen considered.

"I'm into this already about as far as I can go," he said at last. "When I put in thirty thousand I thought it was plenty. I put up your estimated cost of construction. I don't buck a losing game, Ogilvie—never."

"This isn't necessarily a losing game. The pot is there, and it's merely a case of standing a raise."

"Maybe. But the more stock you issue the more ways the pot has to be split, if we win."

"The more you hold the more ways you get in on the split."

"That's true. But you have to put up more. I was figuring on profits on the basis of the present stock issue. Of course, I get more if I buy stock, but I don't get as high a percentage on the whole. No, I don't think I care to invest any more just now. Better get somebody else to take a chance."

"If I had the money," said Ogilvie, "nobody else would get the chance. However, I guess there's nothing else for it. We'd better have a meeting and authorize the issue of the rest of the treasury stock."

The issue was duly authorized, and Ogilvie tried to sell. He found this even more difficult than he had anticipated. He was practically restricted in market to lumber operators or men who knew something about logging, for others shied away from the proposition as if it had been a deadfall, and the former were skeptical.

Ogilvie was forced to admit a number of facts which, viewed from an investor's standpoint, were unsatisfactory. The unforeseen cost of construction, the fact that the present issue would exhaust the treasury stock, and the further fact that he and Foss held a controlling interest, all worked against him. Put into plain words the impression seemed to be that there was a nigger in the woodpile, that he was promoting some sort of a con game or else, having been bitten himself, was trying to unload on somebody else.

He had thought that mention of the fact that Carscallen owned a large block of shares would help with other lumbermen, but it seemed to have the contrary effect. He almost exhausted his prospects without making a sale. Finally he called upon an old lumberman known as Bill Tandy, who though reputed to be strong financially also had the reputation of being hard-boiled; wherefore Ogilvie had reserved him as a forlorn hope till the last. He was big and red of face, was Tandy, and he wore a suit of gray tweeds which bagged at the

knees and sagged at the collar but gave him ample room. He heard Ogilvie through without interruption.

"Yeh, I heard about you boys buckin' this dry-loggin' proposition," he said. "They tell me Carscallen's in with you. In heavy, they say."

"Thirty thousand in shares," Ogilvie admitted, encouraged.

"Uh-huh!" grunted Tandy. "Well, why don't he take some more and help you boys out? He can raise the money all right."

"I guess that's up to him," Ogilvie replied warily. "The investment he has shows his confidence in the proposition."

"Uh-huh!" said Tandy. "You say he won't take any more stock?"

"I didn't say that at all," said Ogilvie.

"I know you didn't," Tandy grinned. "But comin' down to brass tacks, son, ain't it true?"

Ogilvie felt himself driven into a corner.

"Carscallen's attitude is that he is already a heavy investor, and before increasing his holdings he is willing to give somebody else a chance."

"Is, hey!" said old Bill. "Then I guess I don't want any shares, m' son. When Carscallen won't back a hand it's because he don't like his cards."

"He's backed it up for thirty thousand already," Ogilvie pointed out. "What more do you want? It's up to him whether he takes more."

"Well," said Tandy, "I like you, Ogilvie, so I'll give you a tip. I heard Carscallen was tryin' to sell the stock he has."

Ogilvie was amazed.

"Are you sure? Did you get that straight?"

"Well, not too straight," Tandy admitted, "but straight enough to make me leary. That's what I hear. Others have heard it. So I'm not buying into what Carscallen's trying to get out of. I wish you luck, m' son, but that's the best I can do."

"This is news to me," said Ogilvie, "and I find

it hard to credit. But I can see that it's not going to be easy to sell stock around here."

"About as easy as selling steel traps at a fox convention," Tandy confirmed. "I'm sorry, Ogilvie, but you see how it is."

"I see—and I'm obliged to you for telling me. I had no idea there was any rumor of this kind, and I'm going to ask Carscallen about it. Suppose there isn't anything in it, would that make any difference to you?"

"No-o, I guess not," Tandy replied. "I'm pretty well tied up now, anyway."

Ogilvie gave it up. He was depressed, nervous, irritable. His confidence had been badly jolted. Things had gone too smoothly at first. Looking back at the optimism which had anticipated plain sailing, he cursed himself. Now bills were coming in which had to be met. Wages must be paid promptly. So must interest on the various notes outstanding, and renewals arranged on maturity. In all probability a mortgage payment would be due before he received any returns from logs. Snell had handed over the mill, but that was a dead card as a revenue producer for at least a year. Before that, so far as he could see, his affairs were apt to come to an abrupt wind-up. He dreaded the day when he would have to tell Foss that he had fallen down on his end of the job, that he could not find money to continue operations.

He reached Garrett's Bay late on a Saturday night. He awoke some time on Sunday morning, but slept again, seeking sleep as a temporary refuge from the realities which must confront him. When he finally looked at his watch he was amazed to see that it was already past dinner time. He scrambled into his clothes and sought the dining room, to find it deserted save by Mrs. Tarbox.

"Well, now, maybe I ought to have called you," said the voluble landlady, "but I says to myself I'll let him sleep it out. So I had your dinner put back

in the warmin' oven. I b'lieve in sleepin' as long as you can when you can. That's nature, and you can't make no mistake doin' what she tells you. And the Sabbath is a day of rest. Not that you look rested. You don't. As my poor old grandfather used to say—he used strong language, though a professin' Meth'dist and frequent reproved for it by my grandmother—you look's though you'd been drawed through a knothole in the bad place and then beat up with a soot bag, though the same may not be ladylike to tell you."

"Do I?" said Ogilvie. "Well, I feel like it."

"Why, anybody can see you're down in the mouth. Right now you don't know whether you're eatin' chicken or crow. Of course, I know what the matter is, but I wouldn't mention it to nobody for worlds."

"I don't know how you know," said Ogilvie; "but if you do, you know about how I feel."

"Of course I do," said Mrs. Tarbox with sympathy. "Tarbox felt the same way once, or told me he did."

"Then I'm sorry for him," said Ogilvie. "What did he do about it?"

"Why, he asked me again, and then I give in," was the lady's surprising reply. "You 'go thou and do likewise,' Mr. Ogilvie, as the Good Book says, though maybe not intended for such cases. Don't take no woman's first word as the last, for God knows we're changeable as all git-out."

Ogilvie stared at her in amazement. The stout landlady's eyes held a kindly twinkle. She attempted to look very knowing, even arch, nodding at him, her lips pursed.

"For Pete's sake!" he exclaimed. "Do you think that's my trouble? Do you think I'm in love with somebody?"

"That's right, don't name no names," the landlady nodded. "That's delicate, the way I like it."

"But who's the lady?" Ogilvie queried, grinning. "Come on, Mrs. T., tell me?"

"Oh, you can quit pretendin' innocence," chuckled the landlady. "I know what I know and it won't go no farther. I don't talk much, and wild horses couldn't force me to let the cat out of the bag. My advice to you, Mr. Ogilvie, is not to be downhearted nor take to drink, but to ask her again."

"You think I ought to?" Ogilvie grinned.

"I'm sure of it," Mrs. Tarbox replied. "And don't be too meechin' and humble about it. Women like to be bossed. Of course she's red-headed——"

"What?" roared Ogilvie, his grin vanishing. "What's that? Red—you, too? Oh, damnation!"

"Mr. Ogilvie," the shocked Mrs. Tarbox exclaimed, "kindly remember that this is the Sabbath day and I'm a lady."

"I beg your pardon," said Ogilvie, "but you've got this all wrong. It's all imagination."

Ogilvie, cursing internally, finished his dinner in a frame of mind very bad for digestion. Why the devil should people assume that he had any sentimental interest in Noreen Maguire? It wasn't so bad when it was confined to Millie Foss, but Mrs. Tarbox was a gossip. It would be all over. As if he hadn't enough troubles without being hooked up in the local mind with a young woman. It was a darn nuisance. He liked her, enjoyed her company. She was sensible, too sensible to place a wrong interpretation on his liking. She didn't care beans about him, except in a friendly way. Why the devil couldn't people let them and their affairs alone?

Going to his room he lit a cigar, sat down, got up, and paced the floor restlessly. He could settle to nothing. He wanted something, he did not know what. Recognizing this condition for what it was, plain nervousness, he put on a pair of nailed cruisers and a sweater, and left the house.

CHAPTER XX

ON THE RIVER BANK

IT was a day in late fall, cold, clear, still. Already the sun was losing power. There was frost at nights, ice skimming the borders of the little bays. Ogilvie left the town behind him and struck up the river. He walked fast, with a free swing from the hips which covered the ground at an astonishing rate.

In half an hour much of his depression fell from him. He was glowing from the exercise, rejoicing in his own power and motion. As he passed beneath a tree he sprang, caught a limb, and "chinned" it half a dozen times. He found himself whistling a quick-step between his teeth and lengthening his stride. The cold, clear air and the tonic exercise were knocking out the blue devils.

He followed the bank of the river, on a trail which led through brush worn by the feet of rivermen. Presently he came to a sheltered, sandy cove warmed by the afternoon's sun. As he emerged from the trail on one side, Noreen Maguire entered from the other.

Like Ogilvie she was sweater-clad, shod with heavy, tan walking shoes, and a worn Scotch bonnet sat jauntily upon her mass of red hair. Her cheeks were glowing and her eyes clear and sparkling. At sight of Ogilvie she waved a greeting.

"Hello!" she called. "This is a surprise. I didn't know you were back."

This, Ogilvie reflected, was the old Noreen. His mind went back to another autumn day, another river, and a slim, boyish, red-headed girl. They sat down on a convenient log, in the sun.

"I took a lunch and went for a tramp. I'm go-

ing to do that every Sunday through the winter in good weather. It will keep me in shape."

For a moment she regarded him closely. "Something like that would be good for you. You look tired—and worried."

"I am."

"What's wrong? But I don't want to seem inquisitive. Don't tell me unless you feel like it."

"I feel like telling somebody." He told her briefly, finding a relief in giving vent to his worries. "I think I could have sold stock if it hadn't been for that rumor about Carscallen," he concluded.

"There wasn't any pooling agreement between you? He had a right to sell if he wished?"

"Oh, yes, he had the right. I don't dispute that. But he should have told me. If he has tried to sell, his action is mighty apt to cost him all he put in, that's one comfort."

"I don't understand it. He's too shrewd to depreciate the value of anything he owns."

"Well, that's how it stands, anyway," said Ogilvie. "It's a tough situation any way you look at it."

"Just what happens if you can't sell more shares?"

"If we can't pay our way, we shall have to close down. Of course, our creditors will have to be paid, somehow."

"Do you owe much?"

"Not a great deal. You understand that we gave back a mortgage for the timber. We assumed Snell's notes when we bought his mill. Outside those two items we haven't much debt. The mill would pay the notes, and as for the mortgage we'd simply lose our equity. It amounts to this: if we close down Foss and I lose about twenty-five thousand betwen us, Carscallen loses what he put in, and we lose all our prospective profits."

"If I know anything about Mr. Carscallen," said Noreen, digging her heel into the sand, "he won't lose his money without fighting for it. He isn't

that kind. There's something I don't understand. I think he'd be willing, provided he hasn't lost faith in your scheme, to put up more money."

"He refused to buy more stock."

"I don't understand. Of course he might not want to do that, and yet be forced to put up more money to protect his investment."

Ogilvie frowned at the river for some moments. "Well, we'll see," he said at last. "No use spoiling a good afternoon. It's about time we were getting back."

"I thought I'd get in about dark. These aren't Sunday clothes. The good people of the community would think me a heathen."

"Hang the community!"

"You can't. It has to be considered. I don't mind Mrs. Tarbox. She's a good, liberal soul. She'll be surprised to see us come in together."

"Will she?" said Ogilvie grimly. "I don't know about that. The darned old fool——"

"Don't swear at your landlady. It's bad luck. What has she done to you?"

"Nothing. She's merely under the impression that my worried aspect is due to disappointment in love."

"What!" Noreen exclaimed. He nodded.

"Fact. She thinks you turned me down."

"Heavens!" Noreen cried. "What has got into people? We've never given the least cause—there's not the shadow of a reason why——"

"That's the devil of it," Ogilvie agreed. "And I don't know what we can do about it, unless we don't speak as we pass by."

"Then they'd merely think we'd quarreled," Noreen observed gloomily. "It's awful."

"All of that," said Ogilvie. "We're being forced into each other's arms. It looks like a case of marriage in self-defense."

"Do you suggest that we ought to get married to oblige people?" Noreen demanded.

"Of course I don't," Ogilvie returned indignantly. "If you want to get married, *I* don't."

"If *I* want to get married!" she exclaimed with equal indignation. "That's a nice thing to say, a fine way to put it. Do you think I'm hinting at marriage? Why, I wouldn't marry you for—for—I wouldn't marry you to save my life. I wouldn't marry you to save the world from catastrophe. I wouldn't marry you to—to——"

"Well you needn't hunt for any more reasons," Ogilvie retorted. "Say I'm a poor risk or a total loss, and let it go at that. I never said you wanted to marry me. If I thought you did, I'd be hard to find."

"Yes, you said something like that before," she accused him. "You said you wouldn't marry me on a bet. You said I had a temper like a meat ax."

"So you have," Ogilvie returned, standing to his guns. "You go up in the air without the least reason. Living with you would be like working on a log jam with rising water."

"You are the limit!" she cried, springing to her feet. "You say the most brutally insulting things."

"Do you want a monopoly of them?" Ogilvie countered. "Do you expect me to roll over with my paws in the air when you pick up a stick?"

"Archie Ogilvie," she said, "you've got a perfectly vile temper yourself, and you're as stubborn as a mule. I pity your wife."

"All right," said Ogilvie. "I don't claim to be the makings of a model husband; but then I'm not thinking of being a husband. I wish to Heaven you'd be reasonable. I like you—I always liked you. But you're as touchy as a broken finger, and you've got a streak of unreconstructed devil that will make some poor pelican wonder what on earth those words 'for better' in the marriage service meant."

The next instant his left ear rang with the impact of a swinging right hand. The blow was

as swift as the stroke of a cat's paw, delivered with all the power of her strong young body behind it. It rocked him on his feet. In simple, reflex action he sprang and caught her roughly by wrist and shoulder. Her eyes, blazing with anger, looked into his. She wrenched furiously against his grip. Instantly he let go and stepped back.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I didn't mean to touch you—wouldn't, if I'd thought. Would you like to slam me on the other cheek? It's a perfectly safe amusement, I assure you."

For a moment she stared at him, and then the bitter anger left her eyes. They wavered, looked down. Without a word she turned and began to walk slowly away. He heard a sound like a single sob, distinct in the stillness. In two strides he was beside her. She stopped, raising a disconsolate face.

"You were right after all," she said. "I *am* an 'unreconstructed devil.' I—I'm sorry. Good-by."

She turned again, but he put his hand on her shoulder.

"Noreen, let's square this up. You were right about me, too. I *was* 'brutally insulting.' I got just what was coming to me. Let's forget the whole thing and start over."

She stared at him for a moment incredulously.

"Do you mean that?"

"You bet I mean it."

"Archie Ogilvie," she said, "you're just as nice a boy as you were that night years ago when I kissed you against your will. I—I'd like to kiss you again."

"Of course," Ogilvie admitted, "I've got over a good deal of my boyish shyness."

"But you see I've acquired a load of maiden modesty," she laughed, though her color was high.

"You mean that puts it up to me," he said and caught her in his arms. She kissed him fairly on the lips and stepped back, her cheeks aflame.

"There!" she exclaimed. "I suppose I'll be sorry —ashamed of myself. But I've made some amends, anyway."

"If you think it's not enough——"

"Don't!"

"All right. But I'm beginning to wonder if Millie Foss and Mrs. Tarbox aren't right after all."

"What?" Noreen exclaimed sharply.

"Well—it just occurred to me."

"Are you suggesting that you are in love with me?"

"I think I might be very easily."

"Oh, easily! Propinquity—and repent at leisure! You don't have to talk nonsense to me because I kissed you. That was penance."

"Not to me."

She became grave.

"We're pretty good friends when we're not quarreling. I really like you very much—too much to talk nonsense."

"I'm not sure that it is nonsense."

"But you're not so sure that it isn't. Neither am I. Oh, let's look at this sensibly! We were angry, and I behaved like the tomboy you used to know. You were very good about it, and I was very, very sorry. So it's a case of emotion, reaction, and—well—physical contact. We're both young, or at least not old. And we're both lonely. Yes, I believe that's the main thing."

"Loneliness?"

"Yes. We haven't reached the hardened stage of single blessedness. We're both longing for something—call it love or friendship or whatever you like—for somebody to confide in, and some sort of a home other than a boarding house. That's what we really want, and not each other. Love? Oh, no, we don't really love each other."

"You're a cold-blooded analyst."

"I'm nothing of the sort. I'm hot-headed, impulsive—everything I shouldn't be. If I let myself

go—admitted that liking might be love, encouraged you to believe it—what would happen? Wouldn't you, if I said shyly that I thought I loved you, take me in your arms and kiss me, and so on? Wouldn't you ask me to marry you? Wouldn't you marry me? Wouldn't you?"

She spoke swiftly, insistently, pressing question upon question.

"Yes," he admitted, "I would."

"Yes, of course you would. A pretty little quarrel, and a pretty little kiss! We lose our heads and trot off to the minister because there's no reason why we should wait. And before the honeymoon's over we wonder what got into us. You know I'm right, don't you?"

"No," said Ogilvie, "I don't. I mean I'm not sure."

"But you had no idea of marrying me when you met me this afternoon?"

"I admit that. But——"

"But that settles it. Why, Archie, it isn't even love at first sight. Heaven! the sun's going down and we'll be late for supper. A pretty pair of babes in the wood! If anybody had seen us—what a scandal!"

"Then we would get married and stop it."

"What a persistent mind you have! Let's forget matrimony. It's not for us—with each other. Come on. We'll be late for supper."

Ogilvie, as he accompanied her, wondered if she had kept him from making a fool of himself. A slight ringing and stinging in his left ear tended to support this view. But he wasn't sure.

CHAPTER XXI

IN CARSCALLEN'S POWER

MONDAY morning Ogilvie went to have it out with Carscallen. The lumberman greeted him cheerfully.

"How did you make out?" he inquired. "Sell all the stock?"

"No," Ogilvie replied bluntly, "I didn't sell any. I ran up against a rumor that you were trying to unload your shares. That killed my chances definitely. I might as well have been peddling stoves in hell."

Carscallen appeared to be astonished.

"What's that? You heard I was trying to sell my shares. Where did you hear that? Who told you?"

"Tandy told me first. Others had heard it."

"I haven't seen Tandy to my knowledge since I bought the shares," Carscallen stated. "I never tried to sell it, never thought of selling it."

"All the same it got started somehow," said Ogilvie.

"Well, it has no basis," Carscallen asserted. "The only thing I can recall is a remark I made to Wright. He wanted me to go into a deal with him, and I told him that this thing had locked up my available cash, but that I would put it up as collateral to a loan if he could show me a good thing. He didn't, and the matter dropped. You can contradict that rumor absolutely."

"And you can lock the stable door," said Ogilvie. "The damage is done."

"Well, I'm not responsible."

"Perhaps not. That report was one thing. Another was that some prospects asked why you didn't buy more shares yourself."

"What damned business is that of theirs?" Carscallen demanded, his face darkening.

"None at all. I'm merely explaining why I failed to sell, which involves telling you why others refused to buy. But when they asked that question I had to answer."

"Well?"

"Well, I told 'em you had thirty thousand in it already, which showed your faith in the investment; that it was your own business whether you put in more; and that you were willing to let others have a chance at what you considered a good thing."

"And that didn't satisfy 'em?"

"Not noticeably. Some of 'em said if you had faith you'd finance more work. Others seemed to think your willingness to give them a chance at the stock was suspicious. You see, this was all mixed up with the rumor that you were trying to unload. Suspicion attached to the whole thing."

"That's not my fault," said Carscallen, frowning. "What do you purpose doing now?"

"I don't know. These were the people most likely to invest. If they won't, I don't know who will. We have to raise money or shut down. About the only thing I can do is to hunt around for some concern that will take over the whole enterprise. I suppose Foss and I will have to give up most of our stock, but it can't be helped."

"That doesn't seem fair."

"Possibly not. But we aren't in a position to make terms. It won't affect your stock, though, unless you like. You can sit tight with that."

"I don't like your idea," Carscallen observed. "I don't want this thing to fall through, to get into the hands of some crowd I don't know, who'd likely water up the stock with some other proposition and reorganize me out of fifty per cent of the value of my shares. No, I don't like that at all.

I'm for a company with a few big shareholders. That's where the money's made every time."

"I agree with you there," said Ogilvie. "If you can suggest any other way out, let's hear it."

"Well, there's one way," Carscallen returned, "but I don't know how it will strike you. If you don't like it, you'll say so. To start with, let's get the right slant at the situation. You admit that I've never bothered you at all since I came in. You ran the show. I'm not criticizing anything you've done. I merely mention this to show that you've had a free hand.

"I haven't butted in, and I wouldn't make a suggestion now, only that you ask me, and it's up to us to get together to protect ourselves. Now, in the first place, it was necessity that made you sell stock at all. If you could have swung the thing yourselves, you'd have done it. If your credit had been good enough—I'm not speaking offensively—you'd have raised the money yourselves. That's correct, I think."

"Quite correct," Ogilvie assented.

"And it's the like necessity which makes you offer the rest of the stock now," Carscallen went on. "Only nobody wants to take it up. You're quite satisfied of that, are you?"

"Too well satisfied."

"All right," Carscallen pursued. "We wouldn't have offered the stock if we could have got the money otherwise, because its sale would cut into our individual profits by increasing the number of shareholders. The more shareholders, the less stock is worth—if it's worth anything. That's simple, that's axiomatic. Now we can't sell, and we have to raise money somehow. We have to put up to protect ourselves. Your idea is to give most of the stock away to somebody to take the thing over. Mine isn't.

"You say these damned fools wanted to know why I didn't take more stock myself. Well, I'll

tell you why. In the first place, I'd have had to borrow the money, and, in the second, I didn't want to put any more into this thing. That's the plain fact. But now, unless I do something, I see trouble ahead for the money I have in already. We have to put up. We can't raise anything on a second mortgage. The only way to get it is from the bank."

"Our credit is already strained there."

"The company's credit may be; but my own is fairly good."

"I don't question that," Ogilvie admitted. "Do you mean you'd use your personal credit to help us out?"

"That's my meaning. You've been trying to sell stock to the amount of forty-odd thousand. Say we require fifty thousand to swing the whole thing from now on—to take up notes, make a first mortgage payment and log this winter. Lump it at that. Now what I'll do, I'll sign a joint and several note with you and Foss for that amount, and I think I can get the bank to accept it."

Ogilvie was surprised at this offer. It was generous, a way out of a situation which had seemed hopeless.

"Its acceptance by the bank would be on your responsibility," he said frankly. "Neither Foss nor myself has any money. We couldn't pay our proportion of that note if things went wrong. You would be assuming a very real liability of fifty thousand."

"That's the nature of a joint and several note," Carscallen returned. "Of course, the bank will require collateral. The note will have to be secured by the pledge of all or most of the stock we hold individually, or other securities. Would you object to that?"

"No," Ogilvie replied. "It amounts to mortgaging our undertaking, but we have to do it. That's only fair."

"Only fair, as you say," Carscallen nodded. "Of course you and Foss put up more collateral than I do, because you hold more stock. On the other hand, my personal security is perhaps better than yours."

"Yes," Ogilvie nodded thoughtfully.

"You want to get all the angles of this before you go into it," Carscallen advised. "Take a good look at it and think it over before you decide. We can't raise the money without taking risks. If we pay the note—well and good. If we don't, the bank acquires all our shares. If I am forced to pay the note myself the bank hands over all its collateral to me. Looking at it in that way, for an investment of eighty thousand—the thirty I have invested already and the fifty the face of the note—I become possessed of the whole thing. That's clear, of course."

"Yes," Ogilvie said again.

"Of course," Carscallen went on, "if you should pay the note yourself you get my shares. You say that you wouldn't be able to pay, and I might, so that you wouldn't get the same chance, whatever it's worth. That's true enough, but I can't help it. But if the thing fails, if we spend the proceeds of this note and then can't get out logs—if anything goes wrong—then if I have to pay the note myself, I'm out eighty thousand, and all I have to show for it is stock in a busted enterprise which is already mortgaged to the hilt. Do you think that stock would be worth very much?"

"Not a great deal," Ogilvie admitted. "But a moment ago you said you didn't want to put any more money into this thing, in stock, and now you're risking more than the stock would have cost."

"Yes, I see what you mean," Carscallen nodded. "But the chances are I'll never be called on to pay the note, whereas if I bought stock I'd have to put up cash, which I'd have to borrow. I tell

you this confidentially. It comes to this: I'm betting that the company will pay the note, but if it doesn't I'll have the wreck—and it will be a wreck —for salvage.

"I'm forced into making this bet to protect myself, and not because I want to, which is proved by the fact that I wouldn't take more shares. I want you to get the situation clearly. I want you to understand the situation the note will create if it's signed. I don't want any comeback."

"I understand perfectly," said Ogilvie, "and for myself I'm inclined to make the note. But I can't speak for Foss. It will have to be explained to him."

"All right, see him and explain it," said Carscallen. "Tell him just what it means. I don't want any one going into this blind."

Ogilvie went to his own office, shut himself in, and went over the proposition from every angle he could think of. But he could not find any fresh angles. Carscallen had been frank in his analysis of the situation. He had not attempted to conceal the fact that if he were forced to pay the note he would own all the stock. But, as he had said, stock in a smashed enterprise would not be worth much.

Nevertheless, Ogilvie had an uneasy feeling. He distrusted Carscallen. The feeling was instinctive, without a thing to support it. But there it was, blind, unreasoning, obstinate, persistent. He could not get rid of it. But, getting down to brass tacks, he could not see any other way of raising money.

He told Noreen of Carscallen's proposition, and could not avoid showing part of his distrust of it.

"Of course I see your objections," she said, "but you admit there's no other way out. Why not assume that all will go well? You took a chance originally, before you knew whether you could sell any stock at all. It's no more of a gamble than

it was. You gambled all you had then. That's all you're doing now."

"I believe you're right," said Ogilvie. "I'm nervous. I'll send Foss word to come in, and see what he says."

"He'll do whatever you advise."

"I won't advise him. He must make up his mind for himself."

Foss came in from the woods, his good-natured grin on his broad face. He was making good progress. Assuming that his partner would look after the financial end by a sale of stock, he had ceased to worry. He came from his work as happy as a schoolboy on a holiday. But Ogilvie's statement disturbed his serenity.

"'S funny," he said thoughtfully. "Funny about that rumor that queered your sales. Nothing in it, Carscallen said, hey?"

"So he said. I couldn't hang it on him."

"Huh!" said Foss. "I don't know as I like it any too well. If he pays that note you and I are busted flat. But we're pretty near busted anyway. I guess we're up against it. Of course I leave this end to you, Archie. I'll sign anything you say is all right."

"No," said Ogilvie, "I won't take all the responsibility. I've told you how things stand, and you've got to make your own decision."

"Well, what were you going to do yourself?"

"No you don't, Jack. You don't get out of it that way."

Foss rubbed the back of his head violently as was his habit when puzzled. His forehead wrinkled in the effort of an unaccustomed line of thought.

"I don't see what else we can do, if we're up against it the way you say. 'S funny, too. I thought we had enough money to swing it. Oh, well, I guess it's a case. I'll sign the note and put up my stock if you will. Will that do you?"

"Yes," said Ogilvie. "I don't want to, but there's

nothing else for it. Let's go down and see Carscallen and then fix it up with the bank."

An hour later they walked away from the bank, leaving behind them a note for fifty thousand dollars signed by themselves and Carscallen, and all their stock in pledge. They had secured a new lease of financial life, but they were under no delusions as to its terminable nature.

"If we can't meet that note next June, Jack," Ogilvie observed soberly, after they had walked a block in silence, "we'll be looking for jobs in the fall."

Foss nodded grimly. "I was watching Carscallen's face when you were putting your John Hancock to that paper," he said.

"Well?"

"Well, it looked to me a lot like the face of a man with a pat hand watching the other fellows pay to draw. It looked like I've seen an old hand in a blind watch the birds set their wings for the last swing to the decoys; like I've seen a fellow feint another wide open for a right cross. Somehow it gave me the notion that he's got us where he wants us. It set me thinking. And thinking's damned hard on me, Archie."

"Thinking what?"

"That's the hell of it," Foss replied, rubbing the back of his head. "I don't just know. It isn't clear; it's all sort of blurry. Thinking isn't my line. I'm slower than blazes, take me off my own job. But here: we've spent a thundering lot of money, and Carscallen knew we were spending it. He wished that damned Asseltine on us. Then he wouldn't take any more stock, and the rumor got going that he was trying to unload what he had. That was funny."

"He explained that."

"Oh, yes, he explained it. He would. I don't know. I can't get hold of anything. But the minute we'd signed that note I had a hunch. I

said to myself: 'Jack Foss, as sure as God made little red apples this thing is a deadfall. You're skinned, you and Archie.' The big fish eat the little fish every time. Carscallen is figuring right now where he'll sell your hides!"

"He might like to sell 'em. But if we get out the logs we're all right. If we can't prove our proposition with this money, it's no good anyway, and Carscallen will lose more than we will."

"Well, I don't know," said Foss, shaking his head. "It looks that way. I'm not saying I know how this deadfall works. But I'm as sure it's there and that we're under the drop log."

"You put in the logs and we'll get 'em out," said Ogilvie.

"I'll do my best," said Foss, "but it'll depend some on the winter. They say it's going to be a rip-snorter."

"Who says so?"

"Your old boss, Torrey, for one."

"What the devil does he know about it?"

"I don't know. He's a pretty wise old boy."

"Lots of snow makes good hauling and lots of water in the spring."

"Depends on how it comes. Too much is bad. Plugs roads."

"Oh, for *God's* sake quit croaking!" Ogilvie snapped suddenly. Foss looked at him in mild surprise.

"Keep your shirt on, Archie. I didn't know I was."

Ogilvie regretted his outburst. "I'm sorry, Jack. I didn't know how much this thing has got on my nerves. I've been living with it for weeks."

Foss patted his partner's shoulder with a huge, brown paw.

"That's all right, Archie. I don't blame you a little bit. You've got the heavy end of it, raising the dough. Come on out and have supper with us, Millie's asked Miss Maguire."

CHAPTER XXII

A HARD WINTER

FOSS' prediction of a hard winter seemed in a fair way to be borne out. It began with a November blizzard and continued in storms. The precipitation of the early winter was unusual and the cold was intense. In the woods these conditions interfered to some extent with logging operations. Foss found it hard to keep the tote road open. He had his camp supplies in, and ordinarily would not have been concerned about the road, but Asseltine's work continually demanded supplies.

Ogilvie made several trips to the camps, riding with the tote teams when he made connections and tramping the snow road when he did not. But most of the time he spent in Garrett's Bay.

Now that finances were arranged, he was busy overhauling the mill, putting it in shape for the summer's work. Gradually the feeling of oppression and uneasiness, which he had experienced following the pledge of stock, lifted. Granting the feasibility of their plans, there was no need to worry. The financing of the work to completion which he had regarded as the most difficult part of the enterprise, was done. The rest was on the knees of the gods.

He had spent one or two evenings at Carscallen's house, but found little pleasure in them. Carscallen and his guests played cards for stakes which were too high for Ogilvie, who, besides, had little fondness for the game. They drank, heavily and steadily, but the effect of their potations rarely affected their card judgment. Ogilvie much preferred his own quarters, with a pipe and a book, or a chat

with Noreen, with whom he was now on terms of that easy friendship which permits long silences.

At times they read together, disputing over their respective literary favorites. When the snow grew deep, on moonlight nights they went for snowshoe tramps across country. From childhood both of them had been accustomed to the webs, and were fast and tireless. They would come back, glowing, to hot coffee and sandwiches and the sly innuendoes of Mrs. Tarbox, at which they now laughed frankly as the best method of protection.

"Ah, now, Mrs. Tarbox, darlin', don't be puttin' such thoughts in me mind!" said Noreen in a brogue like thick cream. "It's blushin' I'll be. An' look at Mr. Ogilvie, th' poor, modest man." Here Ogilvie choked alarmingly. "There now, see what ye done! Ye made him swally down his coffee th' wrong way. Pat him on th' back, for he's gettin' red in th' face."

"It's his conscience as much as his throat," Mrs. Tarbox chuckled. "Snowshoein' by moonlight! Well, I s'pose it has its advantages, like helpin' over fences an' such. But in my young days the fav'rite winter sport of young folks was a quiet single drive an' a side-bar cutter, an' a hot brick an'——"

"A hot brick!" Ogilvie interrupted. "Was that necessary?"

"It kept the young man from gettin' cold feet," Mrs. Tarbox retorted, fixing him with her eye. "I've seen these pictures of Little Cupid with his bow-arrer. But to my notion he'd ought to been sittin' in a side-bar cutter with a single horse."

"To-morrow night," Ogilvie promised, "I'll have a hot brick, too."

So much for Ogilvie and cold feet. On the other hand, during the early winter, Noreen had become conscious of a change in her employer's attitude toward her, gradual but unmistakable. It became less impersonal, more personal. He consulted her

more frequently on business details, but these conversations widened and lengthened to include other topics. One evening he called upon her with some trivial business matter as a pretext, and thereafter he dropped in with increasing frequency. When good sleighing came he invited her to drive behind his span of trotters.

Ogilvie observed the lumberman's suddenly awakened interest in his secretary, but said nothing. It was none of his business, and comment would be resented by Noreen. In the background Mrs. Tarbox shook her head. The fat landlady with unsuspected sentiment had built for herself a pretty little romance around Noreen and Ogilvie, of whom she had become fond. It was idyllic, simple, uncomplicated by problems. Now the plot thickened. Here was the eternal triangle. Carscallen was wealthy or reputed to be. Noreen was his secretary. Cophetua and the maid. Romance indeed! But her sympathies were with Ogilvie.

But though Mrs. Tarbox watched closely for the development of romance it appeared to hang fire. Carscallen's visits were void of the signs and tokens of Mrs. Tarbox's experience. He came early and left early. The lights were never turned down. The parlor door was invariably wide open. Such scraps of conversation as she conscientiously overheard had to do with the lumber business. Nobody, as the landlady discovered by a simple arrangement of black threads, ever so much as sat upon the sofa. Romance? Bah! Mrs. Tarbox was disappointed. Men nowadays seemed to have no git-up-and-git to them.

Millie Foss was Noreen's sole *confidante.*

"Well, there's no reason why he shouldn't call on you," the former decided.

"There's the rumor of his engagement to Miss Grant, but nobody seems to know anything about it. Admit it's mere rumor. But I've always been

opposed to mixing office and social relations. I'm doubly opposed when the man is my employer."

"You're not like some girls—you wouldn't take advantage of it."

"*I* wouldn't—no."

"You mean he might?"

"Oh, not that way. I'm not afraid of any dark designs or such rot. I can look after myself. It's the principle of the thing."

"If he wants to call, I don't see how you can help it."

"I know I can't. I can't say: 'My dear Mr. Carscallen, what is the meaning of these attentions to an honest working girl? Are they by any chance matrimonial?' "

"Suppose they are?"

"Suppose they are—not?"

"Why, Noreen Maguire!"

"You think that's shocking, Millie? I'm grown up—though I'm not married."

"I'm sure there's nothing of that—that kind, Noreen. Suppose he should ask you to marry him?"

"Well, suppose it."

"Would you?"

"I don't know."

"Noreen! Do you mean you are in love with him?"

"Not a bit."

"Then you won't marry him," Millie Foss decided with some relief.

"No, I don't think I would," said Noreen thoughtfully. "But there are times—— You don't think I work in an office because I *like* it, do you? You've got your husband and children and home. That's your world. It's a nice world, full of love. You and your husband will grow old together, and little Jack and Topsy will grow up, and you'll have *their* children. Bar death, your world of love enlarges all the time, sweetens, mellows. You're pro-

vided for in every human and material sense. You don't have to worry about that."

"I didn't know you felt that way, dear. I can understand. Every woman wants these things. You'll get them. But don't marry unless you're *sure* you love the man."

Noreen's manner changed. Once more she was her capable self. "How do you make sure, Millie?"

"When you get the real thing," said Millie Foss wisely, "you won't ask me such a silly question. But if you really want to know, I think I know who could tell you."

But Noreen, reddening, did not request further information.

CHAPTER XXIII

CONFIDENCES FROM A DRUNK

TOWARD mid-winter, business took Ogilvie to Falls City where he was forced to remain overnight. He sat through a road company's presentation of a comic opera, and returning to his hotel, descended to the grill where he ordered a steak. While he was waiting for his order an individual entered and made his way between the tables in his direction. Ogilvie recognized Stevens, the engineer.

Mr. Stevens' gait was curiously careful and steady, resembling that of one who endeavors to walk a line with absolute accuracy. Just opposite Ogilvie he lurched a little, abandoned the imaginary line, and supported himself with a hand on Ogilvie's table.

"'Skic—'scuse me!" said Mr. Stevens with elaborate courtesy. "'S fault of floor. Not level. No 'ntentional 'scourtesy, 'sure you."

"All right, Mr. Stevens," said Ogilvie, his deduction falling somewhat short of the fact, which was that Mr. Stevens was velvet drunk.

"Know your face," said Stevens. "Name 'scapes me."

"Ogilvie."

Mr. Stevens shaking hands solemnly, sat down at Ogilvie's table. The latter cursed himself for his rash recognition. Stevens was evidently on a high lonesome. Drunks bored Ogilvie, as they invariably bore sober men. But he made the best of a bad job.

"I'm having a steak," he said. "Better join me." Mr. Stevens shook his head.

"On liquid diet," he announced. "Find difficulty

digesting solids. Cons'quently confine myself to liquids."

"Something to eat would do you good," Ogilvie told him.

"Do I un'erstan' you to 'nsinuate that I'm 'ntoxicated?" the engineer demanded with much dignity.

"If you aren't, I don't know the symptoms," Ogilvie replied.

Mr. Stevens held out a tremulous hand. "Misser Ogilvie," he said with emotion, "mos' men'd evade the queshun. Mos' men liars 'n' hypocrites. You're hones' man, an' as such I clasp your hand. Course I'm 'toxicated. Goin' to stay 'toxicated for a week. Then sober up."

"Better make a start now," Ogilvie advised. "Eat a good meal, and then go to a bath and have a steam-out."

"You come long?" Mr. Stevens queried anxiously.

"I'll see that you get there."

But a brilliant alternative occurred to Mr. Stevens.

"I got better scheme. Come an' get drunk with me."

"You've got too long a start."

"Be a good scout," Mr. Stevens urged. "Be a real good Samari'an an' get drunk with me. If you'll oblige me by gettin' drunk, Misser Ogilvie, I'd appreciate it. I ask it as a pers'nal favor."

But Ogilvie refused curtly. His order arriving, appeared to stimulate appetite in Mr. Stevens who ordered cold beef and pickles, and ate voraciously. When he had finished he lit a cigar and leaned back wagging a didactic finger. The meal had failed to exercise a sobering effect, possibly because he had washed it down with two high balls.

"Why," he demanded, "'s civ'lized man make himself a slave to bus'ness? What's bus'ness? Art'ficial condition created by man. Man sh'd be master of his creations. Why's he create monshter like Frank'stein? Med'cal science tells us to re-

lieve nerve strain—relax. I'm relaxing. Ought to try it, Ogilvie."

"I'm not strong enough," said Ogilvie. "It's all I can do to stand work. I want to ask you a question: You remember when we met back in the bush—when you took Foss and me for tie hacks?"

"Remember perf'c'ly," Mr. Stevens assented. "Viewed you with s'picion. Didn't want you around my camp."

"Because you guessed we were after the timber?"

"Not 't all," Mr. Stevens explained. "Thought you might be—you'll pardon the s'picion—lousy."

"I don't blame you," Ogilvie grinned. "But who was the fellow you had with you? What was his name?"

"Boy in my office. Good boy."

"No, I mean the other fellow. Looked like a tough bush foreman. You called him Jim."

"Jim," said Mr. Stevens. "That's his name."

"What's his other name?"

"Name 'scapes me. Jim. Tha's good 'nough."

"Where did you pick him up?"

"Guide," Mr. Stevens replied succinctly.

"You mean the man you were working for sent him along to show you the way?"

"Uh-huh!" Mr. Stevens assented from the depths of a glass.

"And you don't remember his name?"

"Jim," said Mr. Stevens with finality. "Answered to it perf'c'ly."

"Did you ever hear him called Flynn?"

"Never heard him called anything," Mr. Stevens replied. "Only Jim. Dam' good name. After the 'Postle James. Lots of 'em. Jim Blaine; Jim Garfield; Jim Corbett."

Ogilvie gave it up. He had thought he might obtain some information for the benefit of Noreen, something which might help to clear up the paternity of little Kitty.

"How you gettin' along with your timber prop'sition?" Mr. Stevens asked.

"All right. Your report on that was mistaken."

Mr. Stevens shook his head. "Not 't all. Perf'c'ly good report. No mistake 't all."

"You reported against the feasibility of our scheme."

"Cert'nly not."

"Why, you told me you did," Ogilvie said in surprise. Mr. Stevens winked solemnly.

"'S bluff," he said.

"What?" Ogilvie cried in amazement.

"All's fair in bus'ness," said Mr. Stevens with a negligent wave of his hand. "'S all over now. Bluff didn't stick. No harm done. No hard feelings between gen'l'men."

"You mean," Ogilvie queried, "that you reported to your principal that the proposition was feasible; and then tried to bluff me out by telling me it wasn't? But how did he know I'd ask you?"

"Took chance," Mr. Stevens elucidated. "Knew you'd have to get engineer's report to sell stock. You saw me there. I'm dam' good engineer. Thought you'd come to me. Perf'c'ly simple, m' dear Watson."

"So it was," Ogilvie admitted. "A damned nice trick. Only it didn't work."

"Bus'ness," said Mr. Stevens. "'S modern bus'ness—art'ficial condition created by man. Man's crooked. Cons'quently bus'ness crooked. Log'cal result. Disgustin' but unavoidable. All in the game. No hard feelings between gen'l'men."

In Ogilvie's mind his original suspicion, long since discarded, revived and grew. Could Stevens' principal have been Carscallen? A number of facts, apparently unimportant, unrelated, now fitted together. Carscallen had admitted that at one time he had contemplated buying the timber. He had bought a large block of shares, practically without solicitation. The advances had come from him,

through the manager of the bank. He had insisted upon the employment of an engineer.

The result of that engineer's demands had been to tie up the company's funds and force the sale of more treasury stock. The rumor that Carscallen was trying to unload had rendered the attempt to sell abortive. Whatever the origin of that report there was no doubt about its effect. Then when money was a necessity, Carscallen had proposed the loan secured by their stock.

Once more Ogilvie was confronted with the question over which he and his partner had puzzled. Had Carscallen rigged a deadfall for them? Was he counting confidently on their failure for some reason known to him alone, in which event he would become possessed of their stock and so of the whole enterprise at a figure much below its real value? If so, what grounds had he for such confidence? What cards had he up his sleeve?

"No; no hard feelings at all," said Ogilvie. "All in the game, as you say. We're in good financial shape now. We've got a good directorate, good financial men."

"D'rectors usually dam' fools," said Mr. Stevens. "D'rectors look wise, make fool s'g'estions, make trouble for men doin' the work. Take my advice, Ogilvie, 'n' fire all your d'rectors."

"There's one I wouldn't fire, anyway," said Ogilvie. "He's our largest shareholder—a practical man."

"Who is he?" Mr. Stevens asked.

"His name," said Ogilvie, "is Carscallen. Ever hear of him?"

He did not need a verbal answer. Mr. Stevens' mouth opened. He stared incredulously.

"Carscallen! You say he's d'rector, large shareholder?"

"Yes."

Mr. Stevens wagged his head profoundly. "Well,

I'm damned!" he muttered. "Y' got to hand it to him, y' got to hand it to him!"

"I thought you'd be surprised," said Ogilvie. "He was the man you made your report for."

But Mr. Stevens was suddenly somewhat sobered.

"Never mentioned him," he said. "Never mentioned name of my principal in any manner, shape, or form. Think you're mind reader, Ogilvie, hey?"

"I can read yours—or what booze has left you," said Ogilvie grimly.

"You're insultin'," Mr. Stevens returned.

"Not yet," said Ogilvie. "If I told you half what I think of you I might be. Good night."

CHAPTER XXIV

A DRIVE WITH CARSCALLEN

OGILVIE returned to Garrett's Bay with considerable food for thought. He was now convinced that Carscallen had deliberately produced the financial situation which had left them no alternative but to pledge their stock. It followed logically that Carscallen contemplated its nonredemption. In turn this meant that he anticipated some hitch in their plans, some temporary failure which would render them unable to pay their proportion of the note, which he would then take up himself. That was plain enough. What was not plain were his grounds for this apparent confidence in the miscarriage of their plans. Over this Ogilvie puzzled unavailingly.

He told nobody but his partner. Foss swore grimly.

"I knew it. I said this was a deadfall."

"But what's the deadfall? What drops the log on us?"

"Search me," said Foss. "All I know is that we'd better keep our eyes peeled. But I'll tell you one thing. Whether it drops or not, some day I'm going to hand Carscallen a lacing. I'm going to tell him why, and then I'm going to give him the father of a licking."

"It's coming to him," said Ogilvie, "but not now. He doesn't know we suspect anything. Keep on good terms with him. I'm going to. He may give something away."

Thereafter he began deliberately to cultivate Carscallen. But nothing of importance resulted. Carscallen seemed optimistic, confident of success. He even made arrangements for a supply of logs

for his own mills. Never did he let fall a word which might be construed as confirmation of Ogilvie's suspicion.

Because of his feeling toward Carscallen, Ogilvie viewed with disapproval and growing anger the lumberman's apparently increasing intimacy with Noreen. He told himself that he had no right to object, but object he did, strongly, if silently. His feelings reacted on his attitude toward her. Instead of frankly seeking her society he avoided her. When she asked him why, he told her bluntly that he did not want to butt in.

"And what do you mean by that?" she asked, flushing.

"You know quite well," he said. "Carscallen seems to be establishing a monopoly of your spare hours as well as your working hours. I don't like monopolies, so I keep away."

"Did it ever occur to you that that merely encourages them?"

"The encouragement," said Ogilvie dryly, "doesn't seem to proceed altogether from me."

Noreen's flush deepened. "You've no right to say that."

"I know it."

"Is there any reason why I shouldn't allow him to show me ordinary courtesies?"

"None that I know of. It's none of my business."

"Does that just occur to you?"

"I think I've kept out of the way. I've said nothing."

"That's the trouble," she told him frankly. "We are—or were—good friends. There's no reason why you should avoid me now. I'm not a pestilence."

Ogilvie grinned. "But you're rather catching, Noreen. I think you've caught Carscallen."

Noreen laughed. "I'm going to be frank with you, Archie. Mr. Carscallen comes to see me, but so far he hasn't said anything along the line of sentiment."

"Well, he will," Ogilvie predicted grimly. "And then what are you going to do about it?"

"I don't know. You don't like Mr. Carscallen?"

"No, I don't."

"Why not?"

"Some day I may tell you. Not now."

"Oh, well!" she said. "But don't avoid me, Archie. I don't deserve it. I—I like you. I want to keep our friendship."

"So do I," Ogilvie admitted. "I've been in the sulks, but I'll come out of them."

"Do. Next Sunday, if it's fine, we'll go for a long tramp. We'll take a lunch, and a pail for tea, and we'll play we're out in the real woods. A circle around, across country, ten miles out and back! That ought to brush off the cobwebs. I haven't had enough exercise lately."

"Neither have I," said Ogilvie. "All right, it's a date."

They went for their tramp and enjoyed it, coming home tired but glowing, with enormous appetites. Mrs. Tarbox beamed upon the renewal of their old relations.

It was in February, month of snows and uncertain weather, that Carscallen suggested a long Sunday drive. He wanted to see a logger named McEvoy who lived in Kirk's Rapids. They could drive across, lunch there, and return in the afternoon.

Noreen hesitated. So far her drives with Carscallen had been couple-of-hours affairs, in and around Garrett's Bay. She had no hesitation at a day's tramp with Ogilvie, including a lunch in the woods, but this seemed a different matter. Carscallen urged, though, and she consented, with the stipulation of an early return, and that little Kitty should accompany them. On Saturday, however, the child developed a cold. Noreen would have called the trip off, but Mrs. Tarbox promised to look after the little girl. Ogilvie, too, had suggested another

tramp, and when she had given her reason for refusal he had shut up like a clam. Why hadn't he asked her before, she inquired.

"I didn't know that tenders had to be in by a certain date," he replied.

"Don't be silly," she said sharply. "You're unspeakably irritating. Do you do it on purpose?"

"It doesn't take much to irritate you nowadays," he retorted. "Your nerves are off center."

"Nerves? My heavens!" she exclaimed. "What do you think I am—a meek, little bread-and-butter miss, a sort of cuddly little kitten that will rub against you and pur?"

"When anybody rubs your fur the wrong way you're not exactly kittenish."

"And you take a delight in rubbing. There's nothing wrong in going for a day's tramp with you, but if I go with anybody else you sulk."

"Call it what you like," he said. "I don't like Carscallen, and I've a mighty good reason for it." And he cut the discussion short by leaving the room and a highly indignant Noreen.

Sunday morning was clear, the air still, the roads near town good, free from pitch holes. Once out of town Carscallen let the team hit their gait. Eager, proud, nervous but tractable, the beautiful animals swung into their stride with a biting crunch of sharp calks, tossing their heads, drawing in deep drafts of air and exhausting it noisily, heads up, ears forward, rejoicing in their own speed and in the work to which they had been bred for generations.

There was no direct road to Kirk's Rapids. It was reached by a series of crossroads, some good, some bad, threading lonely stretches of brush, devoid of settlement. But Carscallen was a good horseman. He made time when he could, and when he could not he saved his team.

Always an entertaining companion, Noreen

thought she noticed a difference in his manner that morning. In it there was more of intimacy, a hint of proprietorship. Occasionally he adjusted the slipping robes around her. His conversation took a more intimate turn.

They arrived at their destination, had lunch, and Carscallen left her with apologies, to find McEvoy. He was absent nearly two hours, and returned grumbling. McEvoy was an ass who couldn't get anything through his head. When he did get it he couldn't make up his mind.

"Mr. McEvoy may be slow," said Noreen, "but you must admit he doesn't lose much money by it."

Carscallen grimaced, for McEvoy, in spite of his slowness, had managed to drive a very hard bargain.

"I wanted to spend the time with you and talk to you."

"We can talk on the way home. We should start now. It's getting late."

Carscallen agreed reluctantly. When they got upon the road Noreen saw that the bright promise of the morning was gone. The sky of the late afternoon was overcast, gray, and threatening. A rising nor'easter, bitterly cold, blew in their faces. The slippiness had gone from the road, and the runners whined dryly as upon sand.

"I'm afraid we're in for a cold drive," Carscallen observed. "Pull the robes up around you."

"I don't mind cold."

"That's lucky because I think we'll get plenty of it."

The wind increased, and the roads, mostly well-beaten when they had passed in the morning, began to drift in. Then came snow, dry, stinging, thin at first, but increasing to a roaring white blur, driven by the gale.

"Blizzard," said Carscallen. "Shall we turn and go back to Kirk's Rapids? In the morning——"

"I couldn't do that."

"Afraid of the proprieties? I know some people——"

"No."

"Garrett's Bay or bust, then," said Carscallen. "Better cover up your face. Get right under the robes."

"How about you?"

"I'll be all right. The horses don't like it. I'll have a job to keep them going into it."

For the bays exhibited the natural tendency of all stock to turn their tails to the wind. Carscallen straightened them repeatedly by rein, and finally with the whip. The weight of the wind increased, the snow was blinding. Carscallen could see scarcely beyond the horses' ears. It began to grow dark.

Noreen, covered by the heavy robes, was, nevertheless, cold. She reflected that it had not been a very enjoyable day. Now they would not be in till long after dark if they got in at all. Suppose they were spilled in a drift and the bays, nervous, high-strung, fretting to the point of intractability, got away? A pretty kettle of fish!

She was aware that the road had been getting worse steadily, but at this point in her reflections they plunged into a drift, wallowed through it, and came to a stop. Barring the road was a gate and fence, which certainly had not been there that morning. Carscallen bit a curse in the middle out of deference to his companion.

"We're off on some side road. I must have taken a wrong turn."

Peering through the gray blur Noreen could just see the outline of buildings. There was no light.

"I'm sorry," said Carscallen, "but I don't think I can make the team face this much longer. I don't know whether I made the wrong turn too soon or too late. The cold fact is—and it's a mighty cold one—we can't drive around for hours looking for the right road on a night like this."

Noreen was forced to admit the truth of his words. She had refused to return to Kirk's Rapids when she might. Now it was a case of making the best of a bad job.

"Of course not," she assented. "You must be nearly frozen. This is a shelter, anyway, and the storm may let up soon."

"I *am* pretty cold," he admitted; "especially my fingers."

This was proved when he tried to unhitch the bays in the lee of a small stable. His fingers fumbled at tugs and snaps. Noreen helped him. Together they blanketed the horses and made them as comfortable as possible in the stable, which was fairly tight.

The house seemed deserted. The doors were locked.

"No time to be particular," said Carscallen, and hit the back door with his shoulder. The fastenings snapped at the second attempt. By the light of a match they saw that they were in a kitchen in which was a rusty wreck of a cookstove. Beside it was a wood box partially filled.

"There's a woodpile outside," said Carscallen, "so we won't freeze, anyway."

He built a fire, and soon the snapping wood began to drive the chill from the room. Noreen found a half-filled lamp, with a cracked chimney. But the house was empty, stripped of furniture save for the old stove which had evidently not been thought worth removing.

"Lucky for us," said Carscallen, bringing forward a couple of empty boxes for seats. "How do you like being marooned in the arctic?"

"I don't like it, but I suppose I'm really responsible."

"In one way. But I quite understand why you didn't want to go back to Kirk's Rapids. I didn't expect you to accept that suggestion."

"Then why did you make it?"

"Because it was the sensible thing to do. You were right enough, though. Gossip flourishes in these small towns."

"Yes," she agreed. "I'm glad you understand that. That was why I hesitated to accept your invitation to-day."

"I saw that you did. But I wanted you to come. I had something to say to you, and I suppose I may as well say it now, though the surroundings aren't very attractive."

"What is it?" she asked.

"I think you know. You're a clever girl. You've seen for a long time that I admired you."

"Of course," she said thoughtfully, "you tried to flirt with me when I first came into your office. Oh, not offensively at all—just mildly, experimentally, to see whether I stood for that sort of thing."

"Well, I plead guilty to that. I saw that you didn't."

"But now you're doing it again, aren't you?"

"No," he said, "I'm asking you to marry me. You've seen this coming. You're too clever not to. Well, what's the answer?"

So there it was at last, the declaration she had half expected some day, but by no means so soon.

"Yes, I've seen it coming," she admitted, "in a sort of a way. That is I thought it was possible rather than probable. But I don't think I know the answer—yet—not this minute."

"I don't urge that. Perhaps I was too abrupt. Take your time. You know me pretty well. I don't think I'm hard to get along with, and I'm fairly well off. Some day I'll be worth real money. As it is, I can give you anything in reason."

" 'All this will I give thee,' " she quoted.

He frowned.

"I'm not Satan. I never heard that the ability to give a girl the good things of this world was a matrimonial disadvantage."

"No, it isn't. And that's my dilemma."

"I don't see why it should be."

"You would if you were a girl with her own way to make. Do you think we don't envy the women who have everything made easy for them—the wives of our employers? Of course we do. That's why the dice are loaded in your favor."

"I'm glad of that."

"No, no, don't misunderstand me. I can't help considering that side of it. But I'm old-fashioned enough to believe in a certain amount of affection—love—as a basis for matrimony."

"And you don't feel that?"

"No," she said, "I don't feel that. And so—I'm sorry, Mr. Carscallen—but that's the answer. I didn't know it myself when you spoke, but now I do. I thought perhaps I might make it a sort of a business proposition, if you should ever ask me. But I find that I can't."

"Look here," said Carscallen bluntly, "is there anybody else? I don't want to be impertinent, but you and Ogilvie are together a good deal."

Noreen felt herself redden.

"Mr. Ogilvie and I are good friends—usually. Nothing more."

"I think he'd like to be something more," said Carscallen grimly. "You'll be wise to pass him up. He's a poor risk."

"Why do you say that?" she demanded with a resentment that surprised herself.

"I know something of his affairs. Don't figure on his giving you the good things of life. He can't deliver."

"Why not?"

"Because the chances are that he'll go broke in a few months," he said viciously.

"Broke!" she repeated, frowning. "You mean his business will smash. But you're a shareholder in it. If it breaks, you'll lose money, too."

"I expect to. I was forced to sign a note with

him and Foss, and the chances are I'll have to pay it. And that's over and above my stock investment."

"But isn't the note protected? Isn't there collateral?"

"Stock," Carscallen admitted. "Matter of form to comply with the bank's regulations. The stock is worthless. Ogilvie and Foss couldn't have raised a thousand dollars on their shares. The real security is my signature." He paused, eying her keenly. "Ogilvie's been talking this over with you," he charged.

"In a general way."

"Oh, I've no objection. They had their backs to the wall, and I helped them out. They couldn't have got assistance anywhere else. Neither of them are business men. Ogilvie tried to swing this thing on a shoestring, and it's pretty nearly frayed through."

"And when it breaks, you get what it was swinging."

"I get what I pay for. And I pay high for it. I pay a note and I get stock that's worthless. Well, that's all I intend to say about that. If anybody would relieve me from my liability on that note I'd be tickled to death. But, coming back to the original subject, I don't give up what I want very easily. Women change their minds sometimes—at least I've heard so. I'm going to try again."

"You will make it necessary for me to leave the office. My resignation——"

"You won't have anything to complain of around the office. When I ask you again a number of things may be different."

He rose, and going to the door, looked out into the night. "It has stopped snowing," he reported, "and the wind has gone down. I think we might make a start."

They drove homeward over badly drifted but passable roads. The night was bitterly cold, but still. The stars were shining now. On the way

they talked but little. Carscallen, occupied with his team and the road, had apparently put sentiment out of his head. Noreen reflected that on the whole he had behaved very well. But his remarks concerning Ogilvie's affairs stuck in her mind.

Carscallen left her at the gate, driving on to put up his horses. At the door Mrs. Tarbox met her, voluble with questions. Where was she during the storm. Wasn't she half frozen? Hungry? There was hot coffee. Should she make a hot toddy?

Noreen replied briefly, asking for Kitty, and was relieved to learn that the child was better and asleep. But Mrs. Tarbox was worried about Ogilvie, who had taken his snowshoes early in the day and had not reappeared. Noreen did not share her anxiety. Barring accidents, she knew he could take care of himself.

Half an hour later she heard his voice in the hall talking to Mrs. Tarbox, then the soft pad of his moccasined feet, which she thought dragged a little as though from weariness. Late as it was, she half expected him to tap at her door, to say a word as he went by. He did not. His footsteps went on and his door closed. She felt an odd feeling of disappointment as she prepared for bed. On the whole, in retrospect, she found no pleasure in the day. It seemed misspent, profitless.

CHAPTER XXV

NOREEN SCENTS A TRAP

FROM that Sunday dated a certain estrangement between Noreen and Ogilvie. There was nothing definite. Outwardly they were on good terms, but it seemed that the old footing of friendly intimacy was gone. Ogilvie no longer dropped in evenings with his pipe and a book. There were no more Sunday tramps. His business affairs appeared to absorb him. Evenings as well as days he spent in his office. Now and then he made a trip to the camps. If he had recreations, they were no longer apparent.

Noreen was hurt rather than angry. She withdrew into her shell of cool politeness. Her relations with Carscallen were now entirely those of business. Never, by word or look, did he refer to that Sunday. In this she recognized his tact. No doubt, in his own time, he would, as he had promised, try again. She admitted to herself the possibility that he might have better success. Meanwhile, she began an intensive study of the lumber business.

Among the many men who came to see Carscallen, Asseltine appeared, late one afternoon. Noreen had never seen the engineer before, and as he waited she studied him curiously. To her he seemed nervous, fidgeting, crossing and uncrossing his legs, shuffling his feet, pulling his mustache. He was of the fussy, pernickity type, diametrically opposed to the cool, quiet men she liked best. She was surprised that Carscallen had suggested him to superintend Ogilvie & Foss' operations. But he might be a very good engineer.

It was nearly closing time when Asseltine was admitted to Carscallen's office. In her own, next

to it, Noreen could hear the murmur of their voices. Closing time came. Noreen put on her overshoes, coat, and hat, and snapped off her light. The office staff had gone. But as she reached the outer door she remembered a letter which she had intended to post. It was lying on her desk. She turned back, entered her office and, knowing exactly where the letter lay, felt for it without switching on the light. At that moment the door of Carscallen's office opened. Without any special reason she stood in the darkness waiting for them to go before she did so herself.

"Everybody gone," said Carscallen. "Safe's locked. Get you the cash in the morning."

"Your check——" Asseltine began, but Carscallen cut him short.

"No checks," he said positively. "A personal check from me to Ogilvie & Foss' engineer? Not a chance!"

"It could be accounted for otherwise," Asseltine suggested.

"What isn't in existence doesn't need to be accounted for," said Carscallen. "I never leave any loose ends. Well, come along. You're sure, when the water rises——"

The sound of his voice died away. Noreen heard the outer door close. But she stood in the darkness, puzzled.

She was possessed of a keen, analytical mind. In her office experience she had seen much of the hidden machinery which turns the wheels of business. She had typed agreements for public use and totally different side agreements for very private use. Now she brought her experience and capacity for analysis to bear on what she had overheard, in the light of what she knew of Ogilvie's affairs.

Carscallen was paying Asseltine for something and he objected to paying him by check, because the engineer was employed by Ogilvie & Foss. Prima facie, then, the payment must have something

to do with such employment. Carscallen did not wish the payment to be known, and his objection was that a check would constitute evidence of it.

But why should Carscallen pay Asseltine at all for work for which he was already paid by the firm. It was barely possible that the lumberman was supplementing the engineer's salary out of his own pocket, as he had suggested his employment. But that theory involved the knowledge of the arrangement by Ogilvie and destroyed the reason for secrecy. She rejected it at once.

Then came the real question: Granting that Carscallen was paying money in connection with Ogilvie & Foss' work, what consideration was he getting for such payment? What was Asseltine doing for him to earn it? For it was inconceivable that the engineer should receive outside money for doing his ordinary work in an ordinary way. The answer, logically, was that he was doing something outside his ordinary work. But what?

Ogilvie's complaint against Asseltine had been that he was too slow, too careful, his work of too permanent a nature. There was no suggestion that he had scamped it or skimped it. Carscallen's last words stuck in her memory: "You're sure, when the water rises——" What assurance was he seeking? That the dam would hold, that the logs would be driven? That would be logical, proper. But was he seeking that assurance, or some other? Were there any grounds for suspecting Carscallen of anything improper, underhand?

Rapidly she ran over what she knew of his relations with Ogilvie & Foss. According to Ogilvie, he had been responsible for the failure to sell more stock. As a consequence the firm was now doing business not on its capital but on the personal liability of Carscallen, Ogilvie, and Foss. All their stock was pledged. Carscallen had predicted that Ogilvie would go broke. He had said that he him-

self would be in for a heavy loss. Then why was he paying money to Asseltine?

Her impulse was to tell Ogilvie what she had overheard. But he was prejudiced against Carscallen. Again, Carscallen was her employer, and to divulge what she had overheard in the office, even by accident, would be a breach of etiquette if not of confidence. In the end she said nothing to Ogilvie.

The winter verged toward spring. Every day the sun seemed to mount appreciably higher. Water dripped from the eaves, and the tops of the lumber piles in the mill yards were bare. The area of open water in the river kept clear by the swift current in the severest weather, enlarged. Now and then little pans of ice broke away.

Now singly, or by twos and threes, appeared shantymen, restless souls who, unable to stand the monotony of the camps until the spring break-up, had asked for their time. Among these was a sprinkling of rivermen, down from the bush for a little relaxation before the drives began, or emerging from some other occupation and heeding the call of spring and approaching open water, as did the wild geese. Hard, lean men, these, smoked by the sun on the snows, alert, catfooted, in the prime of life. Noreen who had known their kind from her babyhood, who had been dandled in the hard arms of a bygone generation of them, smiled on them as she met them on the street, and never once was her smile of pure friendliness misinterpreted.

The rivermen appeared at the office looking for a job and were usually hired, for good, white-water men were scarce and later would be hard to get. Noreen one day saw one of them standing by the railing of the outer office, looking about him and twisting his black felt hat in his hands. He was a big man, bearded, no longer young, clad in dingy, checked Mackinaws, his shirt open at the throat revealing the tanned column of his muscular neck.

He brought into the place of business a tang of the great forests and rivers. Plainly uncomfortable in strange surroundings, he eyed the busy, well-dressed office people with suspicion mingled with contempt. But as he turned his head Noreen caught her breath, for in this stranger she recognized her dead sister's old sweetheart, Jim Flynn.

There could be no mistake. She recognized his careless swagger, unchanged in a dozen years, the high set of his head, the scornful twist of his mouth, the insolent, intolerant, mocking devil in his eyes. Bad he had been, and bad, she thought, he remained, yet not without a certain attraction. Remembering her sister, the golden-haired, feather-headed Kitty, she could understand, now that she herself was older, the fascination this young hero of the river had held.

His eye met Noreen's, but there was no recognition in his glance. She felt her pulse quicken as she crossed the office toward him. Just at first, she decided, she would not reveal her identity.

"You wish to see somebody?" she asked.

"The boss," Flynn replied.

"He's busy just now. Is it anything I can attend to?"

"Do ye hire rivermen?" Flynn asked with irony.

"Mr. Ross, over there, does."

"He don't hire me," said Flynn. "I come to see the boss. You tell him Jim McCann's here."

So Flynn now called himself McCann. It sounded familiar. For a moment she could not place the recollection, and then she remembered. She had seen the name, 'J. McCann' penciled on the corner of Carscallen's blotter where he had a habit of jotting cryptic memoranda. What could he want with Flynn? But Carscallen's woods interests brought him all sorts of callers, with and without appointment.

It amused her to think that the man did not know her, that he did not suspect that the calm

young woman whom he was eying with quizzical insolence was the long-legged, red-haired youngster, sister of the girl he had presumably abandoned. But she could not there, before the office staff, ask him what she desired to know, or say what she wished to say to him. She must get him outside the office, when Carscallen had done with him. She prolonged the conversation.

"Are you a riverman?"

He grinned tolerantly. "There's them that has thought so."

"Where have you worked?"

"On th' river," Flynn replied, grinning wider. He was making fun of her. Something new came into his eyes, a flash of his devil-may-care youth. She realized that he was looking at her with an appraising admiration, but with a certain puzzled expression. "Ye mind me of somebody," he said, "but I can't tell who. What might yer name be, now?"

Noreen hesitated for an instant. Then she borrowed the name of a stenographer close at hand.

"I am Miss Porter," she said. "I'll see if Mr. Carscallen will see you." On an impulse she decided to jolt his complacency. "What name did you say? Was it Burke—or Flynn?" She caught his startled glance of quick suspicion. He frowned at her, his eyes narrowing.

"Neither of them. Me name is McCann."

"Yes, I remember now you said it was. They're all Irish, anyway."

"Ye might be Irish yerself," he retorted, "wid yer red hair an' th' blue eyes of ye."

"Porter isn't an Irish name."

"Well, ye can change it some day."

"Not for McCann," she thrust at him. But he misunderstood her meaning and grinned.

"Ye can if ye like."

Sudden repulsion and disgust filled her. What had possessed her to exchange badinage with this

still physically splendid brute? Biting phrases of her girlhood sprang to her lips, trembled on the tip of her tongue. But she repressed them and entered Carscallen's office.

"This man McCann asked for you specially," she explained.

Carscallen frowned.

"McCann? Oh, yes, I think I know him. Well, I'll see him. Send him in."

Flynn entered the office. The door closed behind him and Noreen went on with her work mechanically, waiting. Half an hour went by, and then Carscallen pressed the buzzer which summoned her. But when she entered his office to her amazement he was alone.

"Why," she said out of her astonishment, "I thought McCann was here. I didn't see him leave."

"He went out the other way." There was a rear door, affording exit, but rarely used. She had not thought of that. Carscallen seldom used it himself, his callers never. He glanced at her curiously. "Are you interested in Mr. McCann?"

"Rivermen are going to be scarce this year," she evaded. "Did you hire him?"

"We can get all we want. I don't think this fellow is a riverman, anyway. Mostly a bluff. I let him go. Now, if you'll take a few letters——"

Noreen's pencil worked with its usual speed and accuracy, but her mind was not on the work. Had Flynn taken alarm at her indiscreet mention of his name? Why had he left by the rear door, so seldom used? And why had Carscallen, who knew rivermen as she herself knew them, lied about Flynn? Flynn not a riverman! With all his faults there was no better white-water man between Temiskaming and tidewater. And Carscallen had some interest in Flynn, under the name of McCann, as witness the note of the name on the corner of his blotter. She could not understand it.

Meanwhile she continued to puzzle over the over-

heard conversation between Carscallen and Asseltine and its relation to the affairs of Ogilvie & Foss. Prima facie there was no reason why she should worry over these affairs. But worry she did. It seemed to her that she should take some action, take somebody into her confidence, but for a long time she delayed.

CHAPTER XXVI

A FISHY SITUATION

CALDWELL, the manager of the Northern Trust Company, opening his morning mail, read one letter through twice. Then he pressed a button.

"Bring all the papers of the Ogilvie & Foss timber purchase," he said, "with a memo of payments, and cruisers' reports."

These he perused thoughtfully, freshening his memory. Then he reached for the telephone.

"Starr & McKelvey?" he said when he got his number. "Get me Mr. Starr, please. . . . That you, Billy? Want to see you. Shall I come over? . . . You will? . . . Good!"

In half an hour Mr. William James Starr, C. E. and other assorted letters, presented himself. Mr. Starr was blocky and red of face, with a choleric expression which did not belie an explosive temper. With a white apron he would have looked like a butcher who hogged the prime cuts for himself. He was, in fact, a consulting engineer with a solid reputation. He had gone to school with Caldwell, and between them there was still the brutal frankness of boyhood. To the world at large they presented fronts of dignity. Together they were two old boys. Mr. Starr refused the cigar Caldwell proffered and cautiously drew a formidable, black plug from his pocket.

"Between friends," he said with a grin, and jammed his still solid teeth through the plug.

"Well, what's your trouble, Pete?"

"Want expert opinion," Caldwell returned.

"In a friendly way, or for money?"

"Both," Caldwell replied. "Here it is, Billy: A good many years ago, before my time, certain tim-

berlands were conveyed to this company in trust to sell at or above a certain price fixed by the trust deed. We held them for years because nobody would give this upset price. But last spring we made a sale to a firm known as Ogilvie & Foss, of Garrett's Bay. We made the sale on terms, and took a mortgage back. Ogilvie & Foss are logging these limits, and purpose getting out their logs by creating an artificial lake by means of a dam or dyke, and driving them down what was an old watercourse to a present waterway. Is that clear?"

"As mud," said Mr. Starr, still masticating vigorously on his plug. "It sounds like a promoter's scheme. Well?"

"Well, Ogilvie & Foss, who had little or no money of their own, organized a company and sold stock, with the proceeds of which they built their dam. The practicability of their scheme remains to be proved. The whole thing, including their ability to pay us, depends on whether they can get out logs in the way they purpose. If they can't, they go smash, and we are thrown back on our rights as mortgagees. Now, we don't want that. We want to clean up this trust and get rid of it. As manager I don't want it said that I dealt with men who couldn't live up to their agreements. When I sell a white elephant I don't want the animal brought back."

"I get you," Mr. Starr nodded. "Let the other guy buy the hay."

"Not altogether that. But we have to consider the interests of the *cestui que* trust."

"Huh!" said Mr. Starr. "The which? Introduce me to your friend."

"The beneficiaries under the trust," Caldwell explained. "We've made a sale for their benefit. We want it to stick."

"Well, where do I come in?" Mr. Starr queried. "I don't know beans about trusts—except that I wouldn't trust a trust company."

"You know something about dams—at least that's the popular fallacy. You know what sort of a structure should hold water, and you'll be able to tell whether what they've built will do that, and whether they can get out logs with the construction work they've done. That's what I want checked up."

"All right; I'll send somebody out."

"I want you to go yourself."

"Me?" exclaimed Mr. Starr. "Me, go out to look at a little two-by-twice pile o' brush and dirt this time of year? Forget it!"

"Personal favor," said Caldwell. "I know it's beneath your professional dignity, Billy."

"Dignity be dam'!" Mr. Starr returned. "It's my rheumatism. I've got to keep warm and dry or I catch hell. Won't one of my boys do?"

"I want your own opinion."

"Oh, well!" said Mr. Starr with resignation. "But it'll cost you."

"That's understood."

"All right. I s'pose these fellers—what's their names?—put in this dam themselves."

"I'm informed the dam was built under the supervision of an engineer."

"So?" said Mr. Starr. "That's diff'rent. What's his name?"

"Asseltine."

"Don't know him. Still an' all, Pete, where do I get in goin' out to check up another man's work?"

"For the mortgagees. It's our right."

"Why didn't you darn mortgagees check construction as it went along? This is a devil of a time to do it."

"We had no special reason to doubt that it was all right."

"Oho!" said Mr. Starr, cocking his head and shooting dead center. "A Senegambian in the winter's wood! Holding out on me, were you? Now you come through."

"I have a letter from an interested person suggesting that in—er—in our interests we have an inspection made."

"Seems funny," said Mr. Starr. "These fellows buy the property to log it. They get an engineer. Well, isn't it to their interests to build a good dam? Where do they win on any other system?"

"I don't know. But you see the suggestion is one we can't possibly overlook, for our own protection as trustees. As a matter of fact, Ogilvie & Foss are in deep water financially. I am advised that they have been forced to pledge their stock as collateral to a loan, which means that the stock will be forfeited if the loan isn't repaid. If the stock is worth more than the loan, it opens a field for speculation."

Mr. Starr shook his head. "Finance is too crooked for me, Pete. I suppose that's why you went in for it. Well, how do I get to this place?"

Some ten days later Mr. Starr again entered Caldwell's office. His face was redder than ever. He walked stiffly, with difficulty, and his first words were a fervently expressed wish that his friend's hereafter might be uncomfortably warm.

"I told you so," he complained. "I told you my rheumatism would give me hell. Right now I'm drawn up into knots."

"Put 'em in your bill," Caldwell suggested.

"I will," said Mr. Starr. "And then some. Well, I looked over this dam, and this Asseltine, and the whole works. Send you formal report later. But it looks all right structurally."

"I'm glad to hear that."

"M'm!" said Mr. Starr. "All ain't as merry as merry can be, out there. Foss—he's running the camps—is sore at Asseltine and sore at the dam. Says it cost too much. So it did."

"But is it good enough? That's the point."

"Looks like it," said Mr. Starr. "The permanence of a dam depends largely on its ability to hold back all seepage. Like a little knock in an engine. If that ain't stopped pretty soon there's a big knock, and then something cracks. Only you can't take the cylinder off a dam to look inside. All I could do was to look at the outside and take Asseltine's word for the inside. If it's built the way he says it is—and nobody said it isn't—it will hold anything it will be called on to hold."

"How about their arrangements for running logs?"

"If they get the water they can run the logs."

"Can they get the water?"

"Dammit," Mr. Starr exploded, "you didn't ask me for a hydrographic survey. But if you saw the snow out there, you'd say there'd be water—all kinds. My private opinion is that they'll get more than they expect."

"Well, that's all the better," said Caldwell. "Then this engineer struck you as knowing his business?"

"I wouldn't say he doesn't. Me, I'd fire him inside a week, if he worked for me, because he'd get my goat. He's too damned dignified. He didn't like my nosing around any too well. Said it was a reflection on him professionally."

"But you explained that it wasn't?"

"Didn't take the trouble. I made him come through with all his data. That was all right."

"Then in your judgment there is nothing we as mortgagees are called on to do to protect ourselves—nothing you can suggest that Ogilvie & Foss should do for their benefit and ours?"

"I'm not a lawyer," snapped Mr. Starr. "You wanted to know what I thought of this dam. It looks all right, and I'm going to make you pay scand'lous for that information. I don't like Asseltine, but that's nothing against him. One of these

days Foss will murder him on gen'ral principles. He's got Foss' goat, just as he'd get mine."

"I've never met Foss."

"Good young feller," Mr. Starr approved. "Straight as a string. Worried about his logs—some. Scrapper. Got talking with an old logger going down, and he tells me Foss is a hellion on wheels when he turns loose. If he ever turns loose on Asseltine——"

With a large and generous gesture Mr. Starr indicated complete demolition.

"My dealings have been with Ogilvie. He impressed me as being straight, but able to look out for himself."

"He'd need to—dealin' with you fellers," grunted Mr. Starr insultingly.

"Do you know Carscallen, of Grant & Carscallen, lumbermen of Garrett's Bay?"

"Oh, him," said Mr. Starr. "I've met him. What's he to do with it?"

"How did he strike you?" Caldwell asked, ignoring the query.

"Didn't strike me for anything."

"I mean, what do you think of him?"

"Don't have to think of him."

"Oh, come on, Billy," said Caldwell, who placed considerable reliance on his friend's judgment of men.

"I asked you a question myself," evaded Mr. Starr. "Come across."

"So you did," Caldwell admitted. "Well, this Carscallen bought a big block of Ogilvie & Foss' shares, and became one of their directors. I'm further informed that he is on a note personally with the two of them for fifty thousand, for which the stock of all three is collateral."

"Seem to keep pretty close tabs on him," Mr. Starr commented. "Interests identical, ain't they?"

"On the face of it. But Ogilvie & Foss have no money. They hope to pay the note from the sale

of logs. If they can't get the logs or can't sell them, Carscallen will pay and in return will acquire all the stock."

"Well, you'd still get your money. He'd have to make the payments to you to protect himself."

"But meantime our security would have been impaired by the cutting of timber which would be deteriorating if allowed to lie in the woods all summer. Now, in confidence, I may tell you that Carscallen has been paying money to Asseltine."

"What for?"

"That's the question. Naturally Ogilvie & Foss—the firm—would pay him for his services to them."

"Carscallen paying him for some other job?"

"He's been working full time for Ogilvie & Foss. What seems to clinch it is that Carscallen paid him in cash, refusing to pay by check because a check might be evidence of such payment. He actually told Asseltine, or so I am informed, that it wouldn't look well for him to make him a payment while he was working for Ogilvie & Foss. What do you think of that?"

"Too many for me," Mr. Starr admitted. "Where do you get all this?"

"I'm not at liberty to tell you. But my informant has a pretty level head."

"Situation looks fishy," Mr. Starr admitted. "Your idea is that Carscallen is paying Asseltine for doing a rotten job so that these boys will default on the note, and he'll get their stock. And yet I've checked over the job and it looks all right. In fact, it's too good for the purpose. But that may be lucky, if big water comes down."

"But it looks like a waste of good money?"

"That's about it."

"Um!" said Caldwell. "I've seen useless expenditure forced before now—for a purpose. I'll have to look into this thing for myself."

"Go out and see Foss," Mr. Starr advised malevolently. "The road's damnable. Trip'll likely give

you pneumonia, but it'll jolt up your torpid old liver. I'd like to see some of you pot-bellied old financiers on the jobs you wish on us."

"I take plenty of exercise," Caldwell stated.

"Yes, you do! Finger movements—counting money."

"I take plenty of real exercise."

"What do you call real exercise?"

"Well, in the summer I play golf."

"Golf?" Mr. Starr echoed. "Golf! Real exercise!" And with deep feeling Mr. Starr invoked the name of his Creator.

CHAPTER XXVII

FLYNN ALIAS M'CANN

ALL winter Foss had strained every nerve to put in the logs by which alone the obligations of himself and his partner could be met. That winter the snowfall had been abnormally heavy. Foss had plowed out his logging road time and again, until the snow thrown aside had so narrowed the roadway that he could do it no more. After that it had to be broken and tramped. This resulted in the roadway growing higher after each snow. On it was good going; off it a team wallowed to their withers.

The trouble, though, would be in the spring, taking out the last of the logs, or in heavy thaws. For, though the packed road, practically ice, would endure while the surrounding snow settled and sank, it would soften in spots. A sinking runner would mean an upset. Moreover, in soft weather, the horses' hoofs would ball.

Down this road Foss kept a constant stream of logs flowing to the banking grounds by the little lakes, piling them there in high dumps to await the water. He had his camp back in the timber some miles from the logging pond, and he cut mainly toward it, working on the principle of getting out the easiest stuff first, a necessity in view of their finances. Meanwhile the dam grew to completion.

Foss, somehow, felt a special enmity toward it. Every time he looked at it he thought of its cost. Again, he did not like Asseltine. The supercilious air of the engineer, his care in dress, his attitude, scarcely altered, of being independent of Foss, all irritated the logger. Then there was George Erysipelas, whom he detested without any special rea-

son. At every contact with the foreman he bristled like a fighting dog. Foreman, engineer, dam—Foss damned them all to himself. He wished he could have found fault with the structure, but save on the score of its cost there seemed no grounds for that.

"It ought to hold water," he observed grudgingly one day to Asseltine as the latter was giving instructions to his foreman. "The Lord knows it's cost enough."

The engineer's eyebrows lifted in an expression which Foss never saw without an insane desire to plant his fist between them.

"Cheap work is usually poor work, Foss," Asseltine returned. George Erysipelas nodded gratuitous agreement.

"That is so," he observed. "You get him cheap, you get him nasty."

Now, that day, things had gone wrong with Foss from the start. He had held down the safety valve of a rising temperature for some hours. Now he released the valve. He turned on the foreman cold-eyed, his mouth drawing straight and grim.

"Who asked you to shove in your face?" he demanded in brutal insult. "Take it out, and keep it closed when I'm talking, or I'll do both for you!" And coldly, between his teeth, he added phrases embodying the choicest insults known to the logging woods.

Asseltine gaped at him, amazed at the sudden and apparently unreasonable explosion. George Erysipelas' black eyes glittered, but he smiled apologetically, smoothly.

"I am sorry, Meester Foss. It was not my wish to what you say 'butt in.'" He turned and walked away.

"I say, Foss," said Asseltine in his manner which invariably irritated the logger, "that's going pretty strong on my foreman. He didn't say anything to deserve that. He merely agreed with me."

But Foss, now angry with himself for his outbreak, would have died rather than admit himself in the wrong.

"You may stand for a greasy dog like that butting in when you're talking," he retorted, "but I won't. And as for a call-down, I won't take any from you, understand?"

"Nobody's calling you down," said Asseltine. "You're always finding fault with my work on the score of its cost. You're a partner in your firm, and I suppose you have some voice in its affairs. If you could have built a better or cheaper structure, why didn't you do it?"

Which at that particular juncture was decidedly rash of Asseltine, as he realized when he caught the expression in Foss' eye. But the latter restrained himself.

"By the glory! Asseltine," he said, "I don't know what keeps me from handling you. If you've got any sense, remember that every time I look at you I'd like to do it."

He strode away for camp, raging internally. On the way he encountered further trouble in the form of a load of logs capsized at the foot of a hill. The logs were strewn in the snow, the sleigh was smashed, and one of the horses was lamed. It appeared that the roughlock had broken or fetched loose. There being nothing else for it, the teamster had taken the hill on the run, but a turn at the bottom had resulted in a spill.

"You're not fit to sit on a hayrack," said Foss. "Get your time."

The fired teamster spat largely in the snow. "All right," he said. "Your dam' chain busted on me, that's what it was. A loggin' road wid a turn at the bottom of a hill! A hell of a way. To hell wid yer job. I can get another."

"Driving nails," Foss retorted, "not horses."

"You're a liar," the man replied with directness. "I can drive——"

Foss without warning leaped and hit him. The teamster came gack gamely, but he was hopelessly outclassed. He sat up in the snow and shook a dazed head.

"'S all I want," he observed. "They was tellin' me you used to fight some. I'm here to remark that they wasn't lyin', to mention."

Foss grinned, for with the action his ill-humor had passed like a cloud.

"Never mind about getting your time, Dinny. This goes as an accident, like the rest of it. You're a good teamster."

So Dinny Riordan, who was really a first-class man, remained and bore no grudge.

Toward spring, when the comparatively warm days of mounting sun alternated with cold nights, Foss met with a misfortune in the loss of Torrey. The old foreman, all his life contemptuous of colds which he refused to coddle, developed symptoms which alarmed Foss, who drove him out. Torrey pulled through a bad case of pneumonia by the skin of his teeth, but he was through with logging for that season at least. His work fell on Foss.

When Foss found himself apt to be short of rivermen he sent word to Ogilvie to pick up all he could. Also he sent word out elsewhere that he wanted men, and presently they began to straggle in over the snow road. One day there appeared a big, bearded man whose face was vaguely familiar to Foss. His name, he stated, was McCann. He was a riverman and wanted a job.

"Where have I seen you?" said Foss. McCann shook his head.

"I've never worked in your camps."

But as he spoke Foss got his recollection. McCann was the man who had been with Stevens. He told him so. McCann appeared to be surprised. He had not identified Foss with the tie hack of that time. Foss, suspicious from what he knew of him, cross-questioned him. But he got little out of

McCann. He had been broke, having blown his winter's "stake." Stevens had hired him to go along, and that was all there was to it. The explanation was reasonable enough, and Foss was satisfied.

McCann found accommodation in the sleeping camp. When the crew came in at night he was quite at home. Supper over, he sat on the "deacon seat," chatting easily with his new companions.

Across the bunk house Mr. Callahan who had not before noticed the newcomer peered through the drifting tobacco smoke.

"Who's that felly?" he asked the man next him; "th' big man wid th' whiskers?"

"They say his name's McCann. A riverman he is. He come in to-day. Do ye know him?"

"I've seen him somewheres," Mr. Callahan replied, and just then his gaze encountered McCann's right foot which, moccasin clad, was swinging idly from his crossed legs. It was a foot disproportionately and strikingly small for its owner's bulk.

For Mr. Callahan, the old hand of McLachlin's camps, had promptly recognized Jim Flynn, for whom he had no love. Nor, as he knew, had Flynn any love for him. They had never come to an open rupture in the old days, but the feeling was there. Flynn had been a dangerous man, a marvel with his small feet. He was said to have killed one man with a kick. He was also said to have tripped a man against whom he had a grudge, in the face of a breaking jam. Wherefore, in the long ago, Mr. Callahan, a good and experienced riverman himself, had quit McLachlin's before the drive started rather than work with Flynn.

"An', barrin' his whiskers, not a day older," Mr. Callahan reflected. "Not a belt-hole thicker in th' body, nor a gray hair in his head. Sure th' divil takes care of his own. He c'd whip me then, an' he'd kill me now. An' him havin' changed his name, it would be bad luck f'r me to tell the boss

who he is. Annyways, Ogilvie will be out wan of these fine days, an' he may know him. I will have nawthin' to do wid it."

When he met Flynn neither gave any sign of recognition. But Mr. Callahan knew perfectly well that he was recognized and that Flynn was suspicious. Several days after, chance threw them together. Mr. Callahan had been doing the work of a cant-hook man on the skidways, and the man with him suffered a minor accident which put him out of business for a few days. He was replaced by "McCann."

Now the work of "decking" logs is a fairly delicate operation, requiring on the part of cant-hook men experience in the ways of moving timber, judgment, skill with a cant hook and, occasionally, agility. The men worked without unnecessary words, guiding the big sticks which were rolled up the inclined skids by horse power. A chain ran around the middle of each log going up, one end being made fast, and the other end attached to a horse. The log rolled up in the loop of the chain. At each end of the log stood a man with a cant hook, checking or accelerating its movement. As a green log weighs anywhere from half a ton upward and is occasionally the most perverse and tricky of inanimate things, there was always the possibility of accident. But the two men, old hands at the game, handled the great sticks with the sure deftness and instant application of strength of experts.

A delay in the supply of logs gave them a chance to rest. Both sat down and filled their pipes.

"Not much more o' this," McCann observed. "Th' loggin' road's going bad. Are ye stayin' on th' drive?"

"Maybe," Mr. Callahan replied. "Time was when I didn't mind cowld water. But now it catches me."

"Some it does," McCann agreed, "but not me."

"Some day it will," Mr. Callahan prophesied. The other grinned.

"They's 'ile in me j'ints," said he.

"All right," said Mr. Callahan. "But ye're not a young felly, no more nor me. Though maybe they's a few years differ'."

"I'm as good a man as ever I was," McCann boasted.

"An' how good was that?" Mr. Callahan asked.

"Good enough," McCann asserted. "I can le'p through me hands or kick th' ceilin' of a room."

Mr. Callahan rashly yielded to impulse.

"I seen wan felly could do that last," he said. "Flynn, his name was—Jim Flynn."

McCann removed his pipe and looked Mr. Callahan in the face. "An' where is he now—this Jim Flynn that you knowed?" he queried, his eyes narrowing.

Mr. Callahan sincerely regretted his impulse. But he replied blandly:

"That's hard to say. Wan of two places. Dhrownded he was, on th' Mattawa."

"Drownded?" McCann exclaimed.

"So I heared," Mr. Callahan affirmed. "Here's logs, McCann."

But the next day something occurred which made Mr. Callahan thoughtful. A log going up slued dangerously. He was at the heavy butt end. He caught it with his cant hook. It was the duty of McCann at the other end to catch the log with equal quickness but with power exerted in the opposite direction. But McCann's grip failed to hold. The full weight of the lurching log tore the cant hook from Mr. Callahan's grasp. He saved himself by an agile leap. Somewhat shaken and thoroughly angry he turned on his coworker.

"Why didn't ye hold yer end?" he demanded.

"Th' dog of me hook tore out of th' bark," McCann explained.

"Did it so?" said Mr. Callahan grimly. "Slips

like them fills graveyards, McCann." He walked over and investigated the other end of the log, finding the mark of the "dog" as it tore through, as McCann had said. The latter watched him, grinning.

"Well," said he, "was I lyin'?"

"Th' marks is there," Mr. Callahan admitted, "but it come near gettin' me."

"An' is that th' first time f'r ye?" McCann asked contemptuously. "Be th' fuss yer makin' it's that, or ye've lost yer nerve."

It was on the tip of Mr. Callahan's tongue to retort that he had not lost his memory, but he restrained himself. He knew that he had only to speak to Foss to get rid of McCann for good, but he had the dislike of his race for an informer. He decided to wait till Ogilvie came to camp. The latter would probably recognize "McCann." If not—well, he would see.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE RELUCTANT SPRING

THE spring was backward, and Foss at first congratulated himself on this, for it meant that he was able to prolong his logging operations an additional fortnight. But when he had secured a couple of weeks' extra hauling and had emptied his skidways the factor of time began to worry him, for it was essential that they should market their logs as soon as possible.

However, he consoled himself with the reflection that when the break-up came it would come with a rush.

But still the spring delayed, hung off, coyly refusing the ardent wooing of the sun. Though geese routed north, clamoring overhead in their long flight, and robins and bluebirds chirped disappointed protest in the shelter of thickets, there was no real thaw. The world—or, at least, that part of it—refused to make the transition from winter to spring.

Foss let all but his rivermen go. They straggled off down the tote road, their plunder piled behind the teams which were now useless. Remained the rivermen, cook, cookees, and blacksmith. The latter sharpened and fitted up peavies and pike poles; cook and cookees made ready their field outfit to accompany the drive when it should start. The rivermen, with little or nothing to do, greased their footgear with time-honored preparations of oil, tallow, pitch, and beeswax, consumed vast quantities of food and tobacco, and speculated upon the weather, lying royally in their recollections of late springs.

"I mind wan spring," said Tom Quilty, "on White River it was, when she didn't open till nigh the middle of June. An' when she did, it froze ice again

in the bays. The logs was iced, mind ye, of mornin's. Dead birds they was—robins an' such—in the bush, be hundreds—froze an' starved to death. Cowld sleepin' them nights. A curse of a spring intirely!"

"That'd be ten years ago, about," Mr. Callahan queried innocently.

"About," Quilty replied unsuspiciously.

"I mind it well," said Mr. Callahan. "They come a snowfall the sixt' day of June. That day as I come t'rough the woods I see a big dhrift of snow about the roots of a windfall wid steam risin' out of th' middle of it. 'That's funny,' I says to meself, an' over I goes to take a look. I walk up on the dhrift, an' all of a sudden it gives way, an' down I go—an' land in a hole alongside a black bear still in his winter's sleep. It's his breath risin' that made th' steam."

Whereat somebody smote the stung Quilty between the shoulders and bade him take his medicine for the qualified goat he was, to bite.

Mr. Callahan had had no more trouble with McCann. They had ceased to work together shortly after the episode of the slueing log. In and around camp McCann seemed changed from the Jim Flynn of old in that he did not seek the spotlight. Mr. Callahan explained this on the joint theory that he had toned down with the years and that he had excellent reasons for not wishing to attract special attention.

On a Sunday, Foss, on a tour of inspection of the dams on the old watercourse came upon his bête noire George Erysipelas in company with McCann. The two men were standing by one of the dams. Foss spoke to McCann as he passed. He ignored the Greek utterly, as was his custom. The two looked after him.

"Some day," said George Erysipelas slowly, "I will take that dam' Foss to pieces to see w'at make him go."

McCann eyed him critically.

"Foss has good use of himself, I've heard tell," he observed.

George scowled. In McCann dwelt the same contemptuous, insolent spirit as in Foss. Confident as he was in his own strength and skill, this calm contempt, this assumption of superiority, had its effect upon him. With men of his own race he felt at ease, dominant. When he presented his lowering front they were afraid, half beaten. But these careless, swaggering, cold-eyed men of the woods, who fought for fun, merely to see which was the better man, in spite of himself dominated him.

In anticipation of the break-up Foss moved from the logging camp in the woods to the summer camp at the dam, and sent word to Ogilvie. The break-up came with a sou'west wind and a slashing rain that turned the snow to water which, unable to absorb in the still-frozen earth, sought surface outlet. The moisture below and above filled the woods with a dense fog. The ear was filled with the noise of waters, falling, trickling, running; and soon above these rose the diapason of streams swollen above their banks, their waters rushing down to find a level.

The partners, standing at the door of the summer camp, on almost the spot where they had first canvassed the possibilities of the enterprise, listened to the wind, the rain, and the sound of rushing waters.

"It's sure a-booming," said Foss. "I guess we get our water, Archie."

"Looks like it," Ogilvie agreed. "There's a tremendous quantity of surface water—more than we figured on."

"Coming all at a clatter, this way," Foss nodded. "That's our piece of luck, and we're entitled to it. There's just one thing I wish."

"What's that?"

"I wish"—Foss paused as he cupped his hands around the bowl of his pipe, shielding a match and drawing strongly on the packed, moist plug—"I wish Carscallen was here to see the pond fill up and the crew get to sluicing. It'd do his heart good—not. But the thing that tickles me most, Archie, is to know that pretty soon I won't need to worry about Millie and the kids. Soon's I get hold of some real money I'm going to salt it for them.

"I'll buy me a bunch of insurance—I'm not too old—just in case. I have a little now, but not near enough. Why, when something's happened to some lad where I've been, I've laid awake nights thinking what Millie would have done if it had been me. Now, I'll fix that part of it. She may be a widow, but by gosh I'll see she has enough to be a widow in style."

He grinned his happy, good-natured grin. Ogilvie clapped him on the shoulder.

"I'll gamble she won't be a widow for forty years."

"Can't tell," said Foss. "I'm a tough rooster. But I've swung clear of the gates ajar by mighty little, half a dozen times. Nobody's luck lasts forever."

"You'll probably die of a fatty heart," Ogilvie told him. "When we get over the hump we'll hire a walking boss or two, and you'll sit in the office and sign checks."

"I s'pose so," Foss agreed. "A man won't work, if he doesn't have to. Nor take exercise. And I'll get a belly on me, and wheeze when I walk upstairs; and when some drunk bumps into me on the street when the drive's down and curses me out I'll be afraid to slam him for fear he'll hit me back and kill me. Sure, that's the way it goes. Oh, well, take some yourself."

"I don't run to fat."

"You will," Foss prophesied. "You'll run to

seed, somehow. They all do. First thing you'll do, you'll get married."

"Nobody to marry."

"G'wan," said Foss. "What's the matter with Miss Maguire?"

"Nothing. Only she wouldn't play."

"How do you know? Millie says——"

"Look here, Jack," said Ogilvie, "I know what I'm talking about. Somebody else has the inside track there."

"Who?" Foss demanded.

"If you want to know—Carscallen!"

"Carscallen! Noreen Maguire marry that——" His description of Carscallen was vivid and virulent. "Not on your life. Are you crazy? Turn over!"

"All right," said Ogilvie. "I don't like him any better than you do, but that's the way the cards are falling."

Foss, bestowing a large and confidential wink on the wet universe, changed the subject.

"When we start sluicing we'll work the men to the limit till we get out of here. I wish we had a bigger crew."

"I picked up all I could."

"I know. I got some myself. By the way, there's an old friend of yours in the crew."

"You mean Mike Callahan?"

"No, another chap. That big husky that was in here with Stevens!"

Ogilvie made no comment for a moment.

"What's his name?" he asked after a long pause.

"McCann—Jim McCann."

"How did you come to hire him?"

"He came out, looking for a job. I wish we had more like him. I guess he's a bad actor, but he's a real slough hog."

Ogilvie asked no more questions, but he sought Mike Callahan. "Mike," he said, "is there anybody in this crew that I used to know in the old days?"

Mr. Callahan looked cautiously around before replying.

"So ye've seen him!" he said.

"Not yet. But it's Jim Flynn, is it?"

"Divil th' doubt!" Mr. Callahan replied.

"He knows you, of course. Does he know you know him?"

"Neither of us lets on. But he knows me, and belike he suspicions that I know him."

"Does he know who I am?"

"I'd say not. Else he wouldn't be workin' in your camps."

"All right. Let it go at that."

"Will ye keep him on?" Mr. Callahan asked in amazement.

"Yes," said Ogilvie. "Keep your trap closed, understand." He left behind him an amazed Mike Callahan.

"F'r th' love of Satan!" the old riverman muttered. "Is he that soft?" He shook his head, but presently grinned. "Oh, I dunno! A long head, has that same lad. An' I'll keep me trap closed, as he said."

Ogilvie went to find Jim Flynn deliberately. He found him by the log dumps, standing on a boom timber, leaning on his peavie and looking at the dam across the rising water. Statuesque in his immobility, bearded, stag-trousered, he typified his calling. He and his kind were direct descendants of the early voyageurs, the *coureurs du bois,* the keel boatmen—pioneers as distinguished from the settlers.

Restless, reckless, hardy, with vices as strong as their physical frames; violent, blasphemous, passionate, truculent, but courageous, for three centuries and more they had blazed the trails and run the waterways and opened the land for the more plodding and industrious. In the immobility of this man's body and the fixity of his gaze as he stood, there was something animal, predatory. At Ogilvie's

approach he turned his head without moving his body, as a hawk turns, and looked full at him. His eye was impersonal, appraising. In it there was no recognition.

Ogilvie nodded. "Coming up fast. Start sluicing in a day or two."

The riverman shifted his position. He knew Ogilvie for a partner in the firm, his boss, but that was all.

"I'd say there'd be enough by then."

"What's your name?" Ogilvie asked abruptly.

"Jim McCann, sir."

"All right. I like to know the names of my crew. I'm Ogilvie."

"Yes, sir. I thought you'd be."

Evidently neither voice nor name stirred recognition. Flynn did not link him up with the stripling of twelve years before. Ogilvie eyed him, considering. The thing uppermost in his mind was not that Flynn had once tried to rob and perhaps murder him, but Noreen Maguire's desire to ascertain the truth about her sister. He could question Flynn himself, but would the latter answer? Likely not. He would probably quit. It would be better to say nothing, to keep Flynn on until they got their drive down to Garrett's Bay, and there confront him with Noreen. He decided on that course. And so he nodded to the riverman and went on.

He found Asseltine on the dam, viewing his completed work with complacency. Of his crew there remained but George Erysipelas and a scant dozen men. Asseltine thought he would go out the next day. There was no reason why he should remain.

"Better stay until we start running the logs," said Ogilvie. "There may be something to do. You can't tell. There is a lot of water to come yet, and we may need your men."

"Just as you like," Asseltine returned. "I think the dam will hold anything."

CHAPTER XXIX

WHEN THE WATER ROSE

DAWN of the next day disclosed a big rise of water. It was beginning to crawl up the flanks of the dam. The flat was now a shallow lake. There was not enough to start sluicing, but the old watercourse had to be filled, which must be done gradually to allow the inevitable sinking and settling to take place before the dams along its course were called on to stand the strain of a full head. So Foss opened his gates and let a small stream down, putting on a crew to fish out floating débris and report if anything went wrong.

With intermissions the rain continued all night. Ogilvie awoke in the downpours, but dozed off with the comfortable sense of security and shelter which rain on a roof produces. It was daylight when he felt himself shaken.

"Hey, Archie, wake up!" cried Foss. "We've got sluicing water, almost, and it's raining fit to flood hell. Get some grub and come out and take a look at things."

Ogilvie dressed hastily, swallowed breakfast, and joined his partner.

"She's risen over a foot," said Foss, "and most of it isn't here yet. Talk about your rain! If it keeps up, we'll be able to swap high-water stories with old Noah."

The creeks were booming, running turgid, muddy, pouring into the basin prepared for them. The water was already lapping the feet of the pine dumps.

"Let's go out on the dam," Ogilvie proposed.

The water was high on its sides. Little waves broke against it with a continuous slap-slap, as on

the weather bow of a boat on a close haul. Nobody was on the dam. Asseltine presumably was in his own quarters, a cabin sheltered by a knoll beyond the dam, near the camp of his crew. Ogilvie looked along the dam and at the rising water.

"I don't know," he observed thoughtfully. "We've done a lot of kicking about this—said it was too good for the job, too expensive. But there's a lot of water here and more coming. If we'd put it in ourselves we might have made a mistake the other way. That's the tendency of our business. We know we have to abandon everything in two or three years, and so we put in makeshifts. In this case we might not have done a good enough job."

"Rats!" said Foss. "Of course our work is temporary, but you notice it turns the trick about every time. I don't say this isn't a good job. It ought to be. These fellows—these experts—give me a swift pain. You hand 'em over your whole bank roll, and go and rustle everything they think they want; and then they soak you a big fee and talk about the good jobs they've done. Why with the money that's been spent on this thing it ought to play the piano and talk seven languages." He turned away in disgust and walked to the reverse side of the dam. Suddenly he swore. "Why, look here!" he exclaimed indignantly, "this dam' thing you've been cracking up don't even hold water. It's seeping through!"

To Ogilvie's alarm there was heavy seepage in one spot. Thin streams of water were trickling through the base. While he looked, a small section of the dam, water-soaked, broke away.

"Blazes!" he exclaimed. "I don't like the look of that. We'll get Asseltine. This has to be fixed."

They found Asseltine in his quarters. He was inclined to be incredulous. But when he saw the spot his expression changed.

"I don't understand this," he said. "I gave instructions——"

"You *gave* instructions!" said Ogilvie. "You were here to see that your instructions were carried out."

"I was away for a week, on business, just about when this section was being built. I'll get it reenforced at once. But it is possible that it may settle itself."

There was no doubt that Asseltine was nervous. He strode off through the rain to the quarters of the remnants of his crew. He did not return at once, and when he did he was alone, plainly disturbed, angry.

"They won't work," he announced.

"Won't work!" Ogilvie exclaimed. "Why not?"

"They say they are through with the job. They say it's some sort of a saint's day, and raining—they have half a dozen excuses."

Ogilvie stared at him, his eyes narrowing; but Foss exploded.

"They have, hey! They'll be working in ten minutes, or I'll know why."

"You can't make these fellows work when they don't want to," Asseltine stated with conviction.

"Can't I?" cried Foss. "Maybe *you* can't. But *my* specialty is making men *jump.* I'll put the holy fear of God into this bunch. You watch my smoke!"

"Hold on, Jack," said Ogilvie. "We'll get our own crew on the job first, and then——"

"No!" roared Foss, his blue eyes blazing. *"I'm* boss out here, Archie, and I'll take no back water from this scum. They'll go to work *now,* by the holy!"

He started for the camp of the construction gang. Ogilvie, as indignant as his partner, though more prudent, followed him. As Foss opened the door, the remnant of the crew, a scant dozen men loafing, smoking in their bunks, looked up. The big foreman, George, raised himself on his elbow, a sardonic smile curving his lips.

Foss, stopping short inside the doorway, surveyed

the occupants of the camp with utter contempt. They were for the most part short, broad men, powerful but slow of mind and of body, accustomed to taking orders, obedient to authority real or assumed, plastic in firm hands. The difference between them and a hard crew of shantymen was essential, basic. Foss allowed his hard, truculent gaze to travel from one to the other.

"Out o' this!" he commanded. "Get out o' here and get to work, every last dog of you!"

At the cracking whiplash of command the men shifted uneasily. Some of them half rose. Their eyes, shifting from the steady, cold stare of Foss, sought George Erysipelas, seeking for denial or confirmation of the order. The latter waved an expostulatory hand.

"The job is through, Meester Foss. The men have work' very hard an' they are very tire'. It is a day of rain——"

"You're fired," Foss interrupted him. "Get your time and pull out. If I catch you around this camp in an hour, I'll make a holy mess of you. Now, you men—get outside!"

The man nearest him, sitting on the edge of a bunk, was slow to obey. Again he looked at the foreman. Foss caught him by the collar and armpit, and with an exhibition of muscular power which surprised Ogilvie, slung him at the door. The man's head cracked against the jamb. He recoiled, half stunned, putting up a hand to a bleeding gash in his forehead. But Foss wasted no time on him.

"Outside!" he roared. "Out, you dogs!"

In an instant he was among them, giving no time for delay, for concerted action, driving them as a trained collie drives sheep. One man turned as the logger shoved him, and cursed him. Foss hit him on the instant, a vicious, lifting punch, with shoulder and body tense to the heel behind it. The man, almost lifted from his feet by the force of the blow,

staggered. Foss caught him, wheeled him around and kicked him into the midst of his retreating companions. With a whirl of curses he drove them through the door.

"Get your tools, now!" he bellowed after them. "Grab your mucksticks, and be working when I come to look at you! Any man that isn't, I'll beat his head off. Move, you blasted hunkies, you dirty dagoes, or I'll murder you!"

He turned to the interior and grinned at his partner, but his grin was the tight-lipped, curling grin of the fighting animal, fully aroused.

"I'll show Asseltine whether these fellows will work or not," he said. "I savvy why they wouldn't work. There's the reason." He nodded toward George Erysipelas. "Now, you!" he said. "You heard me! You wouldn't work in the rain, hey? Well, you'll *walk* in it. Start moving now, or I'll move you."

The big foreman stretched himself insolently.

"You may fire me, yes," he said, "and it is your camp. But you could not move me. You are the dam' roughneck shantyman, the bully with the beeg mouth—the red-face' pig that roll the log—that know nothing more than roll the log. I 'ave the despise for you. You bully those! Me—I take you in my hands an' twis' your neck like the chicken. I break your back like the snake. I insult you!" And he did so in terms which left no doubt of his acquaintance with the substrata of the English language as it is spoken along rights of way. "Will you fight me, you red-face' pig of the shanty, or are you too much coward?"

"Will I?" said Foss. He turned to Ogilvie, his eyes dancing with real joy. "What do you think of my hunch now, Archie?" He turned back to George. "You didn't need to say all that to get a fight," he said. "I've been aching for a chance at you all winter, but I thought you were too wise to give me one. You think because you've licked a

few mongrels like yourself it gives you a license to tackle a white man. Well, when I get through with you you'll know better." He moved slowly toward his opponent, who surveyed him with an intimidating glare. "Bad eye, you've got!" Foss jeered. "You're a holy terror when you're a little better than the other fellow—but you can't stand the gaff when you get it, George! And now you're going to get it!"

"Don't be a fool," said Ogilvie. "You don't have to fight him."

"You heard what he said," Foss returned. "This is my funeral."

"It's damned apt to be," Ogilvie retorted.

"Nobody's asking you to send flowers," Foss snapped. "I'm going to trim him to a peak, and not you nor all hell can stop me."

"Go to it, then, you fighting fool," said Ogilvie, "and I wish you luck."

"'Fighting fool' is right," said Foss. "Watch me!"

George had moved away from the bunks into the center of the room, where he waited. He crouched slightly, shoulders bowed, arms bowed from the elbows, hands open. The pose was new to Foss, but he recognized the poise of it. A wary fighter on occasion, he began to circle slowly.

George turned with him. Suddenly he made the spring of a feigned attack. Foss did not give an inch.

"Whoa!" he jeered. "What's the matter, George? Trip on your own foot?"

George made the cyclonic rush of a bull. Foss met it solidly, bent-kneed, with a savage, two-handed barrage. Slugged to a standstill, the foreman gave back, spitting blood from cut lips, gasping a little from a terrific right hand under the heart. Foss jeered at him.

"Can't stand the gaff, hey? Don't like the white

man's medicine! Quitting already! You half-bred, yellow-hearted——"

Another rush interrupted his deliberate and fairly successful attempt to infuriate his adversary. This time Foss did not slug. He now understood his opponent's game. His own was to keep away. At long range he knew he could hammer the Greek into raw meat. But unfortunately he had underestimated George's speed. In spite of his efforts George got a hold though not the hold he wanted.

Desperately Foss tried to slug himself free. His muscular forearms working like pistons, he drove a succession of short-arm jolts into the great body which pressed upon him. But the muscle-armored body withstood the battering, smothering the weight of the punches by close contact.

When Foss realized that he could not batter himself loose, he clinched. Now, temporarily at least, he must play the other fellow's game. And Foss was a fairly good player. He was exceptionally powerful, in hard condition, with the great dynamics and enduring fiber of generations of hardy ancestors, and beneath the surface strata of his ordinary cheery good humor lay the fighting spirit of the gamecock or the pit dog, combined with the cunning ferocity of the wolf.

George, for all his size and wrestling skill, was not in the condition of the logging boss. He had been accustomed to win his victories easily and he really believed that no man in the lumber woods could prove his match. But now, instead of a blundering victim, he found himself pitted against a hardened, vicious, tricky fighter. The blows he had taken had sapped some of his strength and a little of his confidence. But now, at grips, he regained that confidence. He sought one of his deadly holds.

But Foss proved a hard customer. With but a superficial knowledge of the game, he managed to block his opponent's designs. His ability to apply

every ounce of his great strength suddenly, on the instant, temporarily took the place of skill.

The struggle raged up and down the camp. Foss was not jeering now. He was on the defensive, saving his wind. If he could hold out, he knew the time must come when the big man must slow up in his attack. Already he could tell by the quality of his breathing that this was not far away. Already George had tried half a dozen tricks ordinarily classed as foul fighting. Foss, perfectly cool of head, waited grimly for the opportunity to hand out a few himself.

The opportunity came suddenly. George, in an attempt to shift his grip, relaxed it slightly. Foss' right arm wrenched loose, flashed back, over, forward. His fist cracked against the angle of George's jaw. Just for an instant its recipient was dazed, but it was enough. Foss broke clear.

"And now, my buck," he gritted, "I'll show you!"

He did. Try as he would, George could not again get a grip on the elusive logger. Gradually his efforts weakened. His breath came in gasps. And then Foss went in to finish him as a wolf goes for the throat of a hamstrung moose. At the last he stood off, measuring his distance, but instead of the cracking knock-out which Ogilvie expected to see him deliver, Foss stepped in swiftly and with a heel crooked behind the man's swaying legs and a hand on his chest, threw him. Foss looked down at him as he lay.

"Now," he said, "I guess you'll be sort of careful how you hook up with a shantyman next time. Lie there till you get tired of it, and then hit the trail. You'll be able to travel in an hour or so. If I see you around after that, I'll finish the job. Come on, Archie, let's get out of here."

CHAPTER XXX

STARTING THE LOGS

THEY found Asseltine giving instructions to his crew. The engineer glanced curiously at Foss who had by no means escaped without marks. Foss grinned.

"You've got an ex-foreman," he said. "He's lying down resting now, and he'll come for his time when he's rested enough. If this bunch doesn't work, just tell me. Now, what are you going to do about this dam?"

Asseltine's intention was to put down piles and fill with brush and dirt. Foss set some of the bush crew to cutting and sharpening piles, while others slashed brush. There were but two teams left. These snaked in piles at the ends of logging chains, and, when these were driven, went to hauling the brush and dirt.

It turned out to be a day's job for all hands. All the time it rained intermittently, but the rivermen, semiamphibians, did not grumble. The word got around that the boss had licked George Erysipelas, had done him up right, had trimmed him to a peak, and the crew was pleased. Accounts of the casus belli differed, but Mr. Callahan's version was generally accepted.

"The boss tells him to go to work, an' he tells th' boss to go to hell," was that worthy's succinct résumé. "Then th' boss trims him. More nor that, he t'run half a dozen of thim bloody foreigners out on their ear. An' he tells this jude of an ingineer if he opens his face just wanst he'll t'run him into the pond, yelly legs an' all."

When it grew dark the rain began to pour steadily. Foss, tired and stiffening from his encounter,

lay in his bunk smoking and half asleep, but Ogilvie paced up and down restlessly.

"I don't like this, Jack," he observed at last.

"Huh?" said Foss, rousing from incipient slumber. "What is it you don't like, Archie?"

"This weather—this water. The whole thing. I don't like that seepage. If anything happened—if anything gave way—where would it leave us?"

"With the logs—high and dry and busted," said Foss. "But nothing's going to happen."

"I don't know," Ogilvie worried. "There's an ungodly lot of snow back in the timber and a big area all draining down here. It used to soak up and seep away and flood over that big marsh. But now we've changed the conditions and we don't know just what it will do. I wish we'd put a big spillway in the dam. I'd feel better about it."

"Too late now," said Foss. "I wouldn't worry. If we weren't getting water, you might."

Ogilvie turned into his blankets, but not to sleep. Instead of being lulled by the slash of rain and the sound of wind straining through the trees, these sounds disturbed him. This water, suddenly released from its storage in the form of snow, and from the clouds, must find an outlet somewhere, somehow. He knew the tremendous forces and pressures of confined water, the almost explosive violence with which it sometimes bursts its bounds, and he was uneasy. Every movement of Foss added to his wakefulness. The logger slept heavily, as a dog sleeps; and like a dog's, his slumbers were troubled. Occasionally he muttered. His limbs and body twitched as if he were again fighting his battle of the morning. Dawn was breaking when Ogilvie slept.

Daylight showed that the water had risen nearly two feet in the night and was now high upon the dam. However, the structure was holding, and Foss decided to begin sluicing at once. Immediately the crew began to break out the dumps.

This was a delicate and somewhat dangerous job, annually prolific in accidents; for rolling logs are deceptively and unbelievably swift in motion and peculiarly malevolent in habit. Wedged securely in great piles, the enormous weight of the mass tends to preserve its inertia even after the wedges are removed. It is then necessary to dislodge the lower logs by hand to start the whole. At any moment during this process the whole may leap into swift disintegration. It is a dangerous job.

Mr. Callahan was in the gang which tackled the first dump. Ogilvie spoke to Foss, who beckoned to Callahan.

"Go on down to the dam and help sluice," he ordered.

"F'r why?" Mr. Callahan objected in a grieved tone. "I've bruk out dumps——"

"You heard me," said Foss peremptorily. "Get to hell out of here!"

Mr. Callahan went, cursing under his breath, casting a suspicious eye at Ogilvie. He knew quite well that he was slower than of old, that his muscles did not respond so instantly to his will, that his mind did not telegraph warnings with its old lightninglike speed. He recognized the kind intent of his employer; but his feelings were much those of the old dog who is held in the blind while the year-old pup is sent into the icy water for the bird. But Callahan got less sympathy than the old dog. The friendly pat was denied him.

Joe Laframboise, thickset, swarthy, agile, twisted out a chock with the hook of his peavie, while Pedden and McGillivray did likewise. They worked cautiously, on the alert for sudden movement, but the weight of the mass had settled the logs, binding them together. They threw down a couple of logs from the lower face. These rolled into the water without other result.

"Dose dam' skeed, she's settle," said Laframboise. "Ba'gosh, she's lak rollin' in one iron mine."

"Ain't youse fellies never goin' to start her?" said McCann. "Careful of yerselves, pokin' round th' ends. Why don't ye go out an' rip her loose?"

"You know so moche about break out de dump, mebbe you do somet'ing yourself beside shoot off your mout'!" Laframboise suggested.

"Quit ticklin' at her ribs an' stand back an' I'll show ye," said McCann. He walked out before the pile of logs towering above him, scrutinizing them for a moment, and clamped his peavie solidly into a lower one. "This is her," he said. "Now give me beef on this, an' stand clear." He threw his weight suddenly upon the peavie so that the tough stock bent, while Laframboise and McGillivray boosted from the ends.

The big log turned slowly in its bed, and with a rumbling bellow the whole mass lurched forward and down, directly upon McCann. But the old riverman, as he felt the log give, had disengaged his peavie and leaped clear, though so scant was his margin of safety that the splinters of a heavy butt tore the woolen nap from his stagged trousers.

The mass, dissolved into its component parts, thundered down into the water, throwing spray high into the air, sending a wave across the lake which set the floating logs and boom timbers rocking, the men on them teetering like sandpipers. Only a few logs remained. These the crew rolled into the water. Though McCann had escaped destruction by a mere inch, nobody mentioned the fact nor, indeed, thought of it. It merely established his status as an old, cool hand, a good man with logs.

Leaving Foss to superintend the breaking of the dumps, Ogilvie took the trail along the bank of the old watercourse down which the logs were now running. On the way he passed members of the crew. Some stood motionless on the bank apparently lost in reflection but in reality watching the running logs keenly on the alert for trouble; others were in heavy action at bends and shallows where

the sticks showed a tendency to ground; and occasionally, in midstream, a man mounted on a single log, leaning idly on his peavie, rode down the current to some destination of his own.

At Number One dam the logs were beginning to go through. Mr. Callahan, armed with a pikepole assisted their progress.

"Running all right, Mike?" said Ogilvie.

"Good enough," Mr. Callahan replied sourly. "Next, I s'pose ye'll be sendin' me off the booms to peel spuds f'r th' cook."

"Breaking out dumps is no work for you now," Ogilvie told him. "I didn't want to see you killed. You're not the man you were ten years ago, and if you don't know it, it's time you were told."

Mr. Callahan sighed resignedly and spat in the face of the stream. "I know it," he admitted, "though I try not to let on, even to meself. Nor am I the man I was five years agone. Five years more —aw, to hell wid it!"

"Never mind, Mike," said Ogilvie kindly. "There'll always be a job for you while we're in business."

"Thank ye kindly," said Mr. Callahan, turning a dark red, "but I've earned me pay all me life, an' it's not charity I'll be takin' from anny man."

"No charity about it. Plenty of jobs besides running logs where you'd earn every cent of your pay. How about being our barn boss next winter?"

"It w'u'd suit me," Mr. Callahan admitted. "As ye say, I'm too old f'r th' river."

Leaving his old acquaintance Ogilvie went downstream until he had passed the vanguard of the logs. He returned, satisfied that all was well. That night it began to rain again, with heavy thunder, but he and Foss congratulated themselves. The water was running well in the old waterway, providing an outlet. They felt no more anxiety about the dam.

"Over the hump now," said Foss. "Of course the sluicing is a long job, but we've all kinds of water. By to-morrow the logs will be running into Lebret.

I think we'd better boom there till we get the whole shooting match down, so we can handle them in a bunch."

"You got out boom timbers, did you?"

"On the ground," Foss nodded. "And I boomed off one or two bad places on Lebret—backwaters and swamps—while I was about it. We won't have any trouble, unless with jams, and with this high water they won't amount to much." He was silent for a moment. "Darn it, Archie, I wish I could send word to Millie. She'll be anxious."

"Wire her from Frenchman's Bay when we get down," Ogilvie suggested. "Tell her to pick out a house on Easy Street."

"By golly, that's what I'll do," Foss grinned. "And say, Archie, just remember not to tell her anything about my little fuss with George. She'd be sure to think I'd gone looking for trouble with him. Women are darn' unreasonable some ways." A growl of thunder interrupted him. "All right—rain!" he said. "We can use it in our business."

Once in the night Ogilvie was awakened by what seemed to be a thudding detonation. A heavy electrical storm was in progress. Lightning illuminated the interior of the building with spasmodic flashes. Thunder rumbled continuously. Rain beat and slashed upon the roof. Below these sounds he seemed to hear a rumbling rush, but the echoing roar of thunder dominated and drowned it. Tired and warm in his blankets, with a comfortable sense of shelter from the elements and relaxation from nerve strain, he fell asleep.

When he awoke again it was gray light, and somebody was shaking him violently.

"Git up, Misther Ogilvie!" Mike Callahan's voice cried. "Git up, th' pair of yez! By gorry, th' dirt wall's gone to hell, an' th' wather's out of th' pond, an' th' logs is sthranded dhrier nor th' divil's tindher box! Git up! It's dry loggin' now b' gum!"

CHAPTER XXXI

THE DAM BREAKS

DAZED with sleep and but partially comprehending, Ogilvie sat up in his blankets, seeing Foss suddenly leave his bunk as if propelled by a coiled spring.

"What's that?" he exclaimed. "The dam! What——"

"Gone to hell, like I'm tellin' ye," Mr. Callahan asseverated. "Th' bull cook he goes out f'r a pail of wather, an' he comes back, an' he says: 'Cripes jabers, b'ys, take a look——'"

But neither Ogilvie nor Foss paid any attention to the verbatim report of the bull cook's remarks. They grabbed their garments, thrust their feet into boots they did not wait to lace, and were out in the spreading light of dawn. A disheartening prospect met their eyes.

The logging pond had shrunk. Everywhere logs were stranded. The sluice was high above water level. Across from them was the line of the dam. But in its middle the line broke. There was a great, ghastly aperture through which the waters, they had so laboriously confined, had broken, to spread away in futility across the surface of the marsh.

From a contemplation of this dreary prospect the partners turned to each other, their eyes bitter. For a moment neither spoke.

"Busts us!" said Foss grimly, at length. Ogilvie nodded.

"Like a paper bag—unless we can fix that up."

Foss shook his head. "It's a big break. Take too long likely. Our spring water's what we depend on."

"Yes," Ogilvie admitted. "Well, come on. We'll take a look at it. And I want to see Asseltine."

"Asseltine!" said Foss bitterly. "Asseltine! Damn his soul!"

The words were less profanity than imprecation. Ogilvie glanced at his partner's face, and what he saw in it made him uneasy. He said:

"I know how you feel. So do I. But keep your hands off him, Jack. Don't start."

"No," Foss agreed. "I'd better not. I might kill him, the way I feel. I don't know—I haven't sorted this out yet. There's Carscallen and that note he trapped us into. Remember what I told you? Asseltine's his man. Was he betting on a sure thing, hey?"

"I don't know," Ogilvie replied. "That comes later. We've got our hands full now."

When they reached the dam the extent of the break was apparent. Some fifty yards of it was gone, crumbled, washed away. Ogilvie knew that before they could effect repairs with the means at their disposal the spring water which had been their reliance would be gone. Whether the normal flow of the creeks would provide enough for running logs was doubtful.

The river crew, already on the dam, eyed the two bosses curiously. They knew nothing of their financial difficulties; but they did know that this, in all probability, meant the failure of the logging operations of the winter.

"A hard crack, or I'm missin' me guess," Larry Fuljames observed to Mr. Callahan. That worthy nodded.

"Hard enough. Where are they goin' now?"

"To find that jude ingineer," Fuljames deduced. "Him sleepin', and his work washed out. I wud not be in his shoes if Foss takes a notion to give him what's comin' to him."

Ogilvie and Foss went to Asseltine's quarters, which they entered without the ceremony of knock-

ing. Asseltine roused from peaceful slumber blinked at them.

"Washed out!" he exclaimed when he was apprised of the catastrophe. "That dam? Impossible!"

His astonishment seemed genuine. But Ogilvie cut him short impatiently:

"Don't blat about impossibility. That was your job, your business, your responsibility. We want to know why you fell down on it."

Asseltine shook his head. "I can't tell you. It was well built. You yourself and your partner told me it was too good for the job. It was inspected by an engineer who has a wide reputation. I don't understand it at all."

"I believe you don't," said Ogilvie, "but we don't, either. I'm going to talk plainly to you, and if you're wise you'll be just as frank with us. In the first place I'm going to tell you that Carscallen has a direct interest in our failure to deliver logs. If we don't, he benefits. Is that clear?"

"How can that be when he's a large shareholder in your company?" Asseltine queried wonderingly.

"That would take too long to explain," Ogilvie returned, "but it's the fact. Now you were Carscallen's man, his nominee for this job, and you regarded him as your employer before we told you different. Your work falls down, breaks us, and benefits him. We have a right to be suspicious. I hope you see what I'm driving at. We've got a right to absolute frankness on your part, and we're going to insist on it."

"I see what you mean. But so far from suggesting poor construction to me, Mr. Carscallen's instructions were the very reverse."

"He gave you instructions, did he?"

"Well, perhaps I shouldn't say——"

"Asseltine," said Foss, speaking for the first time, his voice curiously quiet and deliberate, "you'd better come clean. By the glory eternal, if you don't give up every damned thing you know, I'll make

you! I don't want your hide—I want Carscallen's. And I'm going to get it!"

Asseltine hesitated.

"He knows something, Archie," said Foss grimly. "I can see it in his eye. I'm going to have it out of him, if I kill him to get it."

Asseltine's eyes shifted from the hard gaze of the logging boss to Ogilvie's face, but it gave him no reassurance.

"He's right," said Ogilvie to him. "You *do* know something. We want it, Asseltine."

The engineer took another look at Foss and capitulated.

"Mr. Carscallen told me," he said, "that you would want rough, hurried work, but that he wanted something more permanent. He told me not to rush the work, to go slowly. That was all he said at first. Later, he said he wanted the work to be as expensive as you would stand for, and he wanted it prolonged and delayed as long as possible. I objected, but finally I agreed. I—I was under certain obligations to him, and I needed the money badly."

"He paid you, then?" said Ogilvie.

"Yes. But he never suggested at any time that I should put in work that wouldn't hold. I wouldn't have done that, badly as I needed money. That's all I can tell you."

"And yet the work you say was so good failed to stand up," Ogilvie pointed out.

"I don't understand that," said Asseltine, and obviously meant it.

"Boiled down," said Ogilvie, "you were merely to waste our money and hold us back. You weren't told why, but you assumed that Carscallen had his own reasons. Your construction work was good from an engineering standpoint, as apart from its cost."

"That is it exactly," Asseltine admitted.

When he came to look over the break in the dam the engineer shook his head. Other parts of the

structure were intact, solid. Mysteriously this had given way. He could suggest no explanation. As to repairing the break, it would be a long job, requiring the teams which had gone, difficult in face of the flow of water from the creeks.

But it was necessary to do something at once. Indecision in the logging boss is one of the deadly sins. He may give wrong orders, but orders he must give, right or wrong. So Foss set his crew to cutting fresh piles, slashing brush for mattress work, and clearing away débris.

But already his brain was constructively active. His was the mind of the man used to makeshifts, to temporary expedients, from which no more was required than to serve a temporary need. Such a man meets emergencies with unorthodox measures. Asseltine thought of repairing the break in terms of reconstruction of the original. But Foss pondered only how he could get enough water to float logs.

"Look here," he said to his partner, "it looks as if we were ditched, but maybe we're not. We can't rebuild that dam the way it was, that's flat. We might better shut down than try that. But if we could run a row of piling, and back the piles with buttress logs set on mudsills, and face that up with drift-bolted logs and brush, the thing might hold water for a week or two. If it didn't—well, we'd just be out that much, and it won't make much difference."

"Try it," Ogilvie nodded. "It might work."

"Lots of logs," said Foss with a wry grin. "We don't have to cut 'em. Do you think Asseltine told the truth, Archie? Do you think he gave up all he knew?"

"I think so. He was scared."

"It's darn lucky for him he was," said Foss grimly. "Well, can we get at Carscallen?"

Ogilvie shook his head. "Asseltine says Carscallen told him not to do a rough, hurried job, but to do good work. Carscallen would admit that, and

deny all the rest of it. It's his word against Asseltine's, and no other evidence. And how do we know what Asseltine would say when he got over his scare? He couldn't afford to make a public admission which would ruin him professionally. No, I don't think we can get at Carscallen."

Now certain that Carscallen had rigged a deadfall for them, they could not prove it. Least of all could they prove that he was responsible for the failure of Asseltine's work to stand up under strain. The evidence was all the other way. It had been inspected by another engineer, who had pronounced it more than adequate. Its failure was mysterious, inexplicable. It seemed to be one of those bits of hard luck which neither skill nor care can avert.

"Well, if we can't plug that hole, I guess it busts us," said Foss. "I thought I was through working for the other fellow, but I guess not. I can get a job somewhere. But I'm sorry I got you into this, Archie."

"I went in with my eyes open," said Ogilvie. "I'd do it again. I *will* do it again, if we smash on this. I'll go into something else with you as soon as I get another stake. But I feel that the present situation is largely my fault. I was to look after the business end, and that's the end that's going to squeeze us. You did your job all right, but I fell down. I fell for employing Asseltine against your protest, and I fell for that note."

"It was a forced play," said Foss. "We had to sign the note or shut down. We couldn't help it, either of us. And that's Carscallen! He's got us, and we can't get at him. Of course I could go into his office and wipe it up with him, but what good would that do except for the satisfaction of it?" He shook his head gloomily. "I wouldn't care so much," he went on after a pause, "if it wasn't for Millie. She's a good girl, Archie. She never held it up to me that I ought to be making more money, that other girls had things I couldn't give her.

Maybe she thought it. I wouldn't blame her. And just when I thought I was going to be able to give her what I've always wanted to, I fall down. It makes me feel like a yellow dog."

The voice of the logging boss was not quite steady as he concluded, and his hard, blue eyes were a trifle misty. Ashamed of his emotion, he turned away to hide it.

"I get you, old boy," said Ogilvie. "It's a lot tougher on you than it is on me. But maybe this scheme of yours will work, or maybe some miracle will happen."

"Miracles went out of style years ago," scoffed Foss. "It's crooks like Carscallen that always get the best of it. The big fish eat the little fish, every time. But you can tie right into this, Archie: I'm going to get Carscallen some day, and I won't be particular about how I do it."

"I'm with you," said Ogilvie. "But all the same, we'll put down that row of piling and see if we can hold enough water to run logs."

"Oh, yes, we'll do that," Foss agreed, "but I'm not saying it's more than a chance."

Ogilvie nodded glumly, his partner's despondent mood communicating itself to him. Even if their plan worked, could they deliver the logs in time to meet their obligations? It might save trouble if they made up their minds that the enterprise was dead horse. Idly he watched the river crew engaged in clearing away débris. Among them Mr. Callahan was splashing in water above his knees.

"Old Mike will get a devil of a dose of rheumatism out in that cold water," he observed to his partner.

"Tell him to go ashore and hunt for a four-leaved clover," said Foss. "The Lord knows we need some luck. I'm figuring on how we'll rig that pile driver."

But Mr. Callahan was slow to respond to Ogilvie's hail. He poked about in the mud and water, holding

in one hand what appeared to be a broken stick. Finally he stooped, and extracted from the mud a twisted, shapeless object. This in hand, he clambered slowly up the dam, his countenance wearing an expression of deep puzzlement.

"What have you got there?" Ogilvie asked. Mr. Callahan held out his salvage.

"I'm thinkin' it's what's left of a shovel," he said. The section of ash handle was freshly split, riven, twisted. The blade was broken, rolled up as by giant fingers. "It's funny, now," he said. "There it was, lyin' off to wan side, clear of where th' wather bruk through. I find th' handle first, standin' up in th' mud like th' stick of a rocket; an' there's th' blade all bint out of shape, close to. Wud wather do th' likes of that, do ye think?"

Ogilvie took the fragments, turning them over in his hands. But it was Foss who put his thought into words.

"Powder, by the eternal!" the logger exclaimed hoarsely.

CHAPTER XXXII

FOUL PLAY

ABOVE the battered and twisted evidence of the foul play which had brought them disaster the partners stared at each other. Foss' face was dark with the pump of angry blood which suffused even his eyeballs. His muscular hands opened and clutched; his burly frame shook with the sudden fury that filled him, driving out his previous bitter resignation. His feelings found vent in a spout of execration, cold-drawn, venomous, replete with vivid blasphemy. Ogilvie said nothing, but his mouth drew to a thin, straight line, from which finer lines radiated downward. His gray eyes, which had been weary, became bleak.

"Did that damned Asseltine lie to us, Archie?" Foss demanded. "Do you suppose——"

"No, it wasn't Asseltine. *He* gave up all he knew. He wouldn't do it, anyway—hasn't the nerve. When he dallied along and wasted our money that was *his* limit. I heard that shot, Jack—I heard two shots, I believe—but I thought they were thunder. It was thundering anyway, blowing hard with the wind away from the camp, and the dirt would muffle the sound. It didn't take much powder. Once blow a hole, and the water would do the rest."

"It would do that," Foss agreed. "If Mike hadn't found this shovel we'd never have known. Now, who did it, that's what I want to know? He's in the woods somewhere. To hell with this mess! A day or two won't matter. We'll start the whole crew on the hunt. Who was it? Who'd do a trick like that?"

"You can make as good a guess as I can. Mine is that it was the man you licked yesterday."

"By heavens!" Foss cried, "I'll bet you're right. I ought to have killed him when I was about it. The dirty dog! to get square for a licking——"

"Pshaw," Ogilvie interrupted, "you don't think he did that just to get square, do you?"

"Why else?" Foss asked, staring at him.

"It's plain enough to me," Ogilvie replied. "It's Carscallen's hole card. Asseltine to waste our money, to tie us up financially, so we'd have to fall for his plan of borrowing; then somebody else to shoot the dam. Asseltine was to be the goat for that, for if we didn't get wise to the use of powder we'd naturally blame him for faulty construction."

"Then Asseltine didn't know?"

"I'm sure he didn't. We can't prove anything by him."

"We'll prove something when we catch that George," said Foss grimly. "He's got only a few hours' start. He isn't used to the woods, so he'll have to stick to the tote road. But he'll be afraid to do that because if we got wise we'd catch him. And it wouldn't do for him to be caught a few hours' travel down it, when he was fired yesterday. If he quits it and goes into the bush he'll likely lose himself. Oh, we'll get him, Archie. He can't travel fast, because he's too big and beefy. And when we get him, you let me handle him. I'll start him talking! By the glory! I'll start him *praying!*"

"You may roast him a quarter at a time for all I care," Ogilvie responded. "I'm sure he's the man——" Suddenly he broke off. "Good Lord!" he said softly.

"What?" Foss asked.

"Just an idea. Tell you later. Want to speak to Mike a minute before we see Asseltine. Mike," he said to that worthy, who at a little distance had been conscientiously endeavoring to overhear all he could, "where's Jim Flynn? Have you seen him?"

"Glory to God! d'ye think it was *him?*" Mr. Callahan exclaimed.

"We think it was that foreman of Asseltine's."

"That Hairysipelas!" Mr. Callahan ejaculated with strong distaste. "I wud not put it past him, nor anny of his gang. May th' owld bhoy take me bones if th' thought that they makes foreman out of the likes of him don't almost make me ast fer a job as super! But as f'r Jim Flynn—a curse on him! —he's workin' forninst, cuttin' piles."

Ogilvie rejoined his partner, and they went to see Asseltine. The engineer, when they produced the evidence of dynamiting, was indignant. He saw clearly that if the method of destruction had not been detected, he would have been left to shoulder the responsibility of faulty construction. And he told them something new:

"It was through Carscallen that I got that Greek."

"What!" the partners cried, together.

It appeared that Carscallen had mentioned George's name to the engineer, as a good man to help him get a construction gang together. The Greek had been working on railway construction, on a job that was just completed. He had helped in the way suggested. The Greek evidently knew the lumberman, but Asseltine knew nothing of their relations.

"Well, we'll find out when we catch George," said Foss. "We're going after him. And now here's what we want done."

Rapidly he explained his plan of repairs, and Asseltine promised to carry it out in their absence. Part of the river crew would be left with him. The rest would be taken on the hunt for the dynamiter.

Foss selected his men, a dozen of them, woodsmen as well as rivermen; hardy, tireless, keen-eyed. His plan was sketchy, but practical. They would travel fast down the tote road for some twenty miles, after which they would patrol the road and the bush, looking for signs of the supposed fugitive.

The men lost no time. Looking forward to the

man hunt with enthusiasm, they discarded their driving shoes for shoepacks, moccasins, or rubbers according to their individual fancies; they rolled a blanket apiece, descended on the cook's camp for flour, pork, rice, and dried apples, and were ready to go anywhere.

"Got lots of tobacco, boys?" asked Foss. "Matches? Anybody want an extra pair of socks? Help yourself from the van. Jimmy, that shirt of yours is sort of to the bad. Get a new one off that shelf. Joe, you old pea soup, what's that you're cutting your tobacco with? A knife? I thought it was a saw. Come in here and I'll stake you to a new one. The blade of that looks like the backbone of a pike. I'll bet every time you look at it puts you in mind of your wife."

"Ba' gosh! M'sieu' Foss, w'at you'll know about my ol' 'oman's backbone?" grinned the delighted Joe Leduc; for Madame Leduc, as his friends knew, was more than comfortably upholstered. "If you see dat 'oman's backbone, I t'ink for sure you'll use one of dose X ray!"

"Oh, I didn't mean anything about her backbone," Foss retorted amid the delighted grins of his auditors. "But that old knife ought to put you in mind of her because it's lost its temper with you long ago!"

Whereat amid a roar of laughter Joe Leduc scratched his black curls and swore profusely. It was rough repartee, of the slapstick order; but Foss knew how to start a crew in a good temper. That feeble joke about the knife of Joe Leduc would be retailed in shanties for the next five years, by men who had never seen Leduc or Foss.

Among the men chosen, Foss, at Ogilvie's suggestion, had included "McCann." Ogilvie had given no reason, nor had Foss asked for one. Ogilvie spoke to the riverman as he stood ready to start.

"Anything you want, McCann?" The riverman shook his head.

"I don't carry much when I'm travelin'."

"What do you think of our chances of catching George?"

"He'll be havin' quite a start of us. Give me a start like that, an' ye'd not see me."

"No. But he's a different proposition."

"How do ye know it was him?" the riverman asked curiously. "Suppose ye do catch him, can ye prove it on him?"

"Well," Ogilvie replied, "if he left camp yesterday and kept traveling, we won't see him at all. If we do see him, we'll want to know what he was hanging around for. I think he'll tell us—the way he'll be asked."

But Foss emerged from his quarters.

"All set, boys?" he said. "Then let's hit her."

They left camp at a slouchy gait which would have excited the contempt of a track walker. The dam and camp disappeared behind them. The tote road wound away and away between the bare-armed trees of spring, over ground black with the rotted vegetation of ages, soaked with melted snow and rain, littered with last year's leaves. The nostrils were filled with the vital smells of earth emerging from the frost which had bound it.

At the end of two hours they were still hitting the same gait, but the distance which they had covered would have amazed a heel-and-toe walker. They halted briefly by a convenient spring, ate bread and fried pork, filled pipes and were off again. In the afternoon Foss ranged up beside Ogilvie.

"I'm going on the idea that he can't leave the road entirely, because he doesn't know the bush, and he'd be afraid of getting lost. Now, if we could pass him without his knowing it, and get on the road ahead of him, he'd walk right into us."

"You mean cut through the brush to get around him?"

"That's it. Of course we lose some time. But if we keep on the road he's apt to see us first. Then

he'd beat it back into the bush and we'd have an awful job. Likely he'd lose himself, but that wouldn't help us."

"All right. Do we turn off now?"

"Not just yet. I've been looking for fresh tracks since the rain, but I haven't found any I could swear to. He's been careful about that, but he'll forget some place."

Presently Foss found what he sought. In a stretch of mud where the uncovered soil cropped through were footprints.

"I knew he'd get careless somewhere," said Foss. "Those are his boots. I know 'em, because I was watching them to see that they didn't connect with my stomach. All right. Joe, look here. You savvy tracks. How's this fellow going? Is he hitting it up or not. Keep back, boys."

The tracks went on through the mud of the tote road. Joe Laframboise, from his youth a dweller in the woods, with an eye for "sign" perhaps derived from a far-away strain of Montagnais in his blood, announced his conclusions.

"Dat man w'at mak' dose track she's dam' tire'. She's walk heavy on de flat of de foot, an' she don't pick up de toe."

"A couple of miles more and he'd feel like taking a rest?"

"For sure," Laframboise nodded. "Dat man, she's dam' good an' ready for tak' dat rest now."

"All right," said Foss. "Then here's where we take to the bush. You helped put in this road, Joe, and you ought to know the way she runs. Keep about half a mile from it if you can—not less. Go to it now, and make the best time you know how. We'll stay with you."

With Laframboise in the lead they strung out in single file. They had their work cut out to follow their leader, who, obeying Foss' injunction to make good time, slid through the brush with the facility of a wild animal. There was down timber to cross,

ravines, hills to ascend and descend, swamps to avoid. Occasicnally Ogilvie, third in line behind Foss, could not see Laframboise at all; and occasionally the latter was at fault. Then the line stopped till he came to a decision.

They struck the road again just as the light began to fail. Foss and Laframboise went carefully over a section of it and satisfied themselves that nobody had passed that day, on the road at least.

"Got him," said Foss with satisfaction. "He's behind us, sure. He may travel at night—likely he will—so we'll have to keep watch."

They made camp in a dry hollow where thick spruce hid the light of their fire from the road.

"S'pose you and I take the first trick," Foss proposed to Ogilvie. "We'd better take a third man, just in case."

"Take McCann," said Ogilvie.

The three took the first watch. A pale, watery moon in a misty sky gave sufficient light to see some fifty yards down the road.

"We're due to get him," said Foss confidently. "He's apt to come along any time in the early part of the night—that is if we've doped it out right. You savvy, McCann? We pile right into him—don't give him a chance to get away."

The riverman nodded. "Not a chanct," he returned.

But one hour passed, two. The moon set. Darkness prevailed. Then down the road they heard the noise of a breaking stick.

"Coming!" Foss whispered. "I'll make the jump, and you come right after me when I nail him. Quiet, now!"

They heard the sound of footsteps, dull on the soft surface of the road. A dark form loomed on it, walking heavily, stiffly. It came opposite them. Foss rose silently and sprang. There was a startled cry, the impact of bodies, the stamping of feet. Ogilvie leaped forward, the riverman beside him.

In the darkness two men were locked, struggling. The coming two added themselves to the tangle. Ogilvie had difficulty in distinguishing Foss. When he succeeded he went at the other man ferociously, trying to tear him down.

But suddenly he found himself alone, on his feet with him. The arms of the big man encircled him. He was picked up, thrown with a force that dashed the breath from his body. Gasping, half stunned, he heard the sound of running feet on the road in the direction from which George had come. Beside him, on the ground, there was a struggle going on, from which Foss' voice rose suddenly in a fury of curses. The struggle ceased abruptly.

"Well, by th' glory!" said the voice of the riverman, "I thought you was him!"

"You did, hey!" roared Foss. "I'll make you wish to God it was. You blasted idiot, I'll——"

"Has he got away?" Ogilvie cried.

"Got away!" Foss gritted, "I should say he has. This cursed fool of a river hog got me by the throat, tripped me——"

"But I thought you was him!" the offender protested again.

"You thought—hell!" said Foss. "You never thought in your life. You've got nothing to do it with. Couldn't you tell by my size, by my voice——"

"Never mind the post-mortems," Ogilvie broke in. "Now we'll have the devil's own job to catch him—if we ever do."

"You said something," Foss growled, glowering at the riverman. "I've a notion to——"

"Forget it!" Ogilvie snapped. "Put somebody else on the road, just in case—and get some sleep. We'll need it before we get through."

Foss followed him to camp sulkily, still glowering at Flynn or "McCann." Ogilvie, as surly as his partner, rolled himself in his single blanket to think it over.

Had Flynn really made a mistake? He himself had had difficulty in distinguishing between the struggling men at first, but that was before he had taken hold. Then he knew at once. Had Flynn known? Had he deliberately furnished George with an opportunity to break away? If so it went to prove that he was involved with George. The event strengthened his suspicions. He cursed himself for having suggested that Flynn make their third man.

CHAPTER XXXIII

NOREEN CHANGES BOSSES

THAT spring Noreen Maguire was the victim of a feeling of restlessness and discontent which she put down to the season. Though she had not seen much of Ogilvie for a couple of months previous to his departure, his going left a blank. She found herself thinking of his business affairs, and she continued to puzzle unavailingly over the meaning of the conversation between Asseltine and Carscallen. But through it all ran the desire to get away, out of the office, from the atmosphere of indoor routine, to something different.

Into her mind crowded memories of the springs of her young girlhood—of a rising river, of woods breaking into bud, of tender flowers peeping at the sun from sheltered nooks, of birds in bright spring plumage taking up the matters of courtship and nesting. She did her work mechanically, looking much out of the window, at the blue sky and the soft spring clouds drifting across it.

Nor was she the only one whom the season—or something else—seemed to affect. There was a change in Carscallen. He had gradually become nervous, more and more irritable, over trifles. The whites of his eyes were no longer clear, but a trifle muddy, as from impaired digestion or loss of sleep. His hand shook a little, perhaps from the black cigars which he now smoked continuously and fast. He drank a little in the daytime, a thing that he had never done before. It did not at all affect his speech, manner, or business capacity, but it showed that his nerves demanded artificial stimulation.

In these months he seemed to have a mass of business other than his firm's. He was involved, as

Noreen knew, in real-estate transactions. His visitors now included a large and increasing number who had nothing to do with logs or the lumber business. The multiplicity of his interests seemed to press on him.

He had refrained sedulously from making love again to Noreen, for which she was grateful. On that score she had no fault to find, and he never visited his growing irritability on her. But in spite of herself she found her opinion of him colored by what she knew of his relations to Ogilvie's affairs, and by the scrap of chance conversation she had heard.

In the afternoon of what had been a hard day with a mass of worrying details Carscallen went at an accumulation of correspondence. Ordinarily his dictation was rapid, unhesitating, decisive. But on this day he seemed to have difficulty in concentrating on the work in hand. Noreen followed him patiently, striking out, altering, saying nothing. At last he shoved the uncompleted job aside with a muttered word of impatience.

"I can't do anything to-day. Let it go till to-morrow."

"Is anything the matter? You're not feeling sick?"

"Oh, I'm well enough. I need a change, I guess."

"I believe it would do you good."

"Why? What's the matter with me? Have you noticed anything wrong?"

"You're very nervous," she told him.

"I guess I am," he admitted. He was silent for a moment. "About three months ago I asked you to marry me," he reminded her abruptly.

"Yes. But you promised me that here, in the office——"

"And I've kept my promise up to date. I told you I was going to ask you again. Now you've had time to think it over, and I know you've thought it over, because you're a clever woman and not a silly

schoolgirl. You know you're fitted for better things than working in an infernal office. You're tired of that. *I* know. So am I. If you'll marry me, in a few months—as soon as I can clean up some things —I'll quit this business, and we'll go away and *live*. We'll see the world that's worth seeing, and when we get tired of that we'll pick out the place that suits us best, and stay there. We'll be able to do that."

She shook her head. "I'm afraid you must leave me out of your plans, Mr. Carscallen."

"Have you made a set of your own?" he demanded.

"No. But I don't approve of your set."

"I don't know whether to believe you or not," he told her.

"That's not very nice, Mr. Carscallen."

"I know it isn't. But it's the fact. I wonder whether you are turning me down for that fool Ogilvie?"

"He isn't a fool!" she flashed instantly, and turned scarlet at her own swift defense.

"Well, by the Lord!" said Carscallen. "So that's it, after all. Why, you're a worse fool than he is!"

Noreen, her cheeks aflame, rose.

"In that case you can get another secretary at once," she said. "I resign now."

"Because I called the turn of the cards," said Carscallen. "I apologize for my words. But remember what I told you once; Ogilvie isn't going to make good."

"Isn't he?" she said. "Why are you so sure?"

"I told you why, months ago."

"Yes, you told me," she said. "But will you tell me why you tried to get cash from the office safe to pay Mr. Asseltine, instead of giving him your check? What were you paying him for? Will you tell me that?"

She was amazed at the apparent effect of her

words. His face seemed to change, to lose color. And then she saw that he was not looking at her, but beyond her, at the door. She turned.

In the doorway stood a short, wiry, elderly man with a shaggy gray beard, shaggy gray hair, and keen eyes beneath shaggy eyebrows, which gave their owner a startling resemblance to a Scotch terrier. He was a stranger to Noreen. But Carscallen recovering his self-possession passed her with outstretched hand.

"Well, this *is* a surprise," he said.

The human terrier disregarded the hand.

"So I'm thinkin'," he replied dryly, with an accent evidently acquired in the land of hill and heather.

"Why didn't you write me, or wire?"

"For reasons that ye'll appreciate verra soon."

The eyes of the two men held each other. Neither of them paid any attention to Noreen. She left the office. Outside, beyond the railing of the outer office sat two solidly built strangers, their eyes on the door. Miss Porter, the stenographer whose name Noreen had once borrowed, came to her for instructions on some office matter.

"Wasn't Mr. Carscallen surprised to see the old gentleman?" she asked.

"Who is the old gentleman?"

Miss Porter stared at her, and laughed. "Why, of course, he hasn't been home since you came into the office. That's Mr. Grant himself. They say he's a terror to get along with, but none of us know very much about him, because he's left everything to Mr. Carscallen for so long."

Noreen sat down to clear her notebook before straightening her desk in preparation for leaving. The unexpected return of Grant made no difference to her. Finishing her letters she began to pull out the drawers of her desk, to remove her own property. All the time in the pauses of her work she

had heard voices in the next room, the deep voice of Carscallen, the higher-pitched tones of Grant.

It seemed to her that the former was expostulatory or defensive; the latter accusatory, insistent. Then they settled to a level, as if they had composed their differences. While she was still arranging her desk the two emerged from the office and passed her door. Carscallen was frowning, his face drawn and haggard. The two waiting men rose. Grant shook his head and Carscallen went out. After a word with Grant the two strangers followed. Grant returned to Carscallen's office.

Noreen wrote a formal resignation, placed it in an envelope, and entered. Grant was standing by his partner's desk which was littered with papers, books of account, legal documents, share certificates. He was in the act of lighting a most disreputable clay pipe. At her entrance he turned, his keen eyes appraising her. Undoubtedly, she thought, he looked like a terrier.

"Well?" he questioned abruptly.

"I have been Mr. Carscallen's secretary, Mr. Grant. I resigned to-day. I will leave my formal resignation on his desk."

"Give it to me," said Grant. He tore the note open unceremoniously, read it, grunted contemptuously, and flung it in the general direction of the wastebasket. "Why are ye leavin'?" he demanded.

"I prefer not to say."

"Grumph!" growled the human terrier. "How long have ye been wi' Carscallen?"

"A little over a year."

"How much do ye know of his business affairs?"

"As much as he told me," Noreen replied, disliking the manner of the terrier. But he nodded approvingly.

"Where are ye goin' when ye leave? Have ye other employment in view?"

"I haven't made any plans. But I've never had any difficulty in finding employment."

"Ye did not intend to leave, then. Ye made the decision suddenly?"

"Yes."

"Ye seem a close-mouthed young woman," said the terrier with approval, "which isna common, for yer sex is aye gabby. By yon note yer name is Maguire. Weel, Miss Maguire—I suppose ye're no' married—if ye'll stay here as my secretary, I'll mak' it worth yer while."

"I'm afraid I can't do that."

"What's yer objection? I'll no' be makin' love to ye—if that's what Carscallen's been doin'."

Noreen flushed at the uncanny accuracy of the deduction.

"So that's what's trumps!" said the terrier with a chuckle. "Weel, young woman, while I'm no preceesely blamin' him, the closer ye stick to this office the less ye'll see o' him, for he's no comin' back."

"Not coming back!" Noreen exclaimed. "I don't understand."

"Maybe not," said the terrier. "But that bein' the fact will ye tak' the employment I offered?"

"Why—yes," Noreen consented, somewhat bewildered, "if you want me."

"If I didna' I'd scarce ask ye," said the terrier. "I'm no' collectin' young weemin as curios or the like. Ye'll tak' twenty-five per cent increase on yer present salary, whatever it is, an' ye'll earn it, for, as ye've no doubt been told, I'm an auld deevil to get along wi'. Ye'll obsairve I'm under no delusions as to mysel', an' damned few as to others. Now ye may as weel know what ye'll know to-morrow. Carscallen is no longer partner of mine. He has been speculatin' wi' the firm's money on his own account, an' the deevil's mess he has made of it. A hint I got brought me home, an' we've just had it out thegither."

"I never suspected anything like that," said Noreen in amazement. "I knew he had a number of

interests outside this business, but naturally I thought it was all right. Do you mean that he has been arrested?"

"He deserves it," said Grant, "but it would do me no good. I made him turn over the securities he held, good an' bad, though no doubt t'was compoundin' a felony. Ye may have knowledge of some of his transactions which will help me. To-morrow we'll get at the mess, an' straighten it out as best we can."

The mess which they tackled the next day quite accounted for Carscallen's nervousness. There were investments, good and bad, paper everywhere. He seemed to have followed the time-honored method of plunging to recoup original losses. Of some of his transactions Noreen had knowledge; of others none.

In the course of a couple of days Grant came upon the Ogilvie & Foss stock purchase, and questioned Noreen.

"I once had this timber cruised, an' the report was it couldna' be logged profitably. I ken Foss, a young fellow, but a good logger. Who's yon Ogilvie? An' what's their stock worth?"

Noreen answered as best she could. The terrier's shaggy brows drew down and his eyes gleamed.

"While he stuck to loggin' Carscallen was no fool," he said. "Now, here's this note. Supposin' Ogilvie & Foss could not pay it, he stood to acquire good timber which might be logged with a little more capital and wi' large profits. A fair chance—a fair gamble—which I'm succeedin' to."

"Do you think it *is* fair?" Noreen asked.

"An' why not?" the terrier demanded aggressively. "Here's a business transaction between grown men, pairfectly understood by all parties. I am not bound to pay the note, which is Carscallen's pairsonal liability. But his stock is mine, subject to the bank's claim. If it will profit me to pay the note I will do it, an' if the others canna' pay their shares they must tak' the consequences. On the

other hand, if it will no' pay, I will just let it slide, an' the bank may whustle."

"How will you be able to tell whether it will pay or not?"

"I will have a look for mysel' at this timber an' their loggin' works."

"They have done a great deal of work and had a great deal of worry," Noreen told him. "Perhaps I shouldn't say so, but I think Mr. Carscallen counted on paying this note himself and acquiring all the stock. Mr. Ogilvie and Mr. Foss thought that, too."

"That's a good hearin'," said Grant, with satisfaction, "providin' the proposition is legitimate. An' Carscallen could see as far through a grindstone as the next man. So ye think I'll have the privilege of payin' yon note an' takin' over all the stock of Ogilvie & Foss." And looking very much like a terrier which has a rat in a corner the old lumberman rubbed his hands joyously.

If Noreen had hoped that he would show sympathy to the extent of relinquishing his strict legal rights she was disappointed.

"It's not a nice thing to say," she went on, "but at one time I thought it possible that Mr. Carscallen had arranged to bring about a temporary failure which would render them unable to make their payments."

"Whishoo!" whistled the terrier. "Yer grounds?" he asked.

When she told him he shook his head. "The mortgagees inspected the works, ye say," he said. "I know Peter Caldwell, and I know yon engineer, Billy Starr. I doubt there's nothing to yer suspicions. Anyway, 'tis no affair of mine. Nobody can say that I had hand or part in it. But I must see for mysel' whether the stock will be worth mair than the note."

"Suppose it is," said Noreen in a last effort, "and suppose Ogilvie & Foss couldn't pay, would

you give them an opportunity to redeem their stock?"

The terrier scowled ferociously. "The loggin' business is no' preceesely founded on the doctrine of brotherly love," he observed. "Wi' brilliant exceptions maist of my business acquaintances would have made excellent pirates. Who's Ogilvie & Foss, that I should go behind a business transaction that's pairfectly understood? Would they do the like for me?"

"I think they would," Noreen told him. "I know Arch—I mean Mr. Ogilvie——"

"Heh, heh, heh!" the terrier yelped in villainous delight. "Go on, lassie. Losh! but yon's a fine color in yer cheeks!"

"He'd be fair," said Noreen, the color referred to extending its area. "They were driven into a corner when they signed that note. They understand the situation, of course, and they're not whining. But if the situation were reversed they'd do the fair thing. Neither of them would squeeze anybody."

"Then they'll be exceptional young men," the terrier grinned wickedly; "mair especially this 'Arch-Mister Ogilvie;' for Foss, as I know, is married."

"That's the worst of it," said Noreen. "Mr. Ogilvie has nobody but himself. But Mr. Foss has the nicest wife and two of the dearest kiddies in the world."

"That's no' fair!" growled the terrier. "What have I to do wi' Foss' marital responsibilities? Ye'll not know me very weel, young woman. I have the name of a hard man, a veritable Shylock, out for ma' poun' o' flesh."

"I don't believe it," said Noreen. "Down at bottom you're soft-hearted."

"There's them will tell ye auld Aleck Grant has no heart at a'," said the terrier. "I'll mak' no promises. I'll jus' go out an' see this loggin' proposcetion for mysel'. The young men'll no' be

able to deceive me wi' fairy tales, for I was loggin' before they were born."

"May I go with you?" Noreen asked. The terrier's bristles rose in alarm.

"What—what!" he barked formidably. "Na', na', young woman! Travelin' wi' a young female would be the ruin of ma' reputation. In yer innocence ye'll ha' no conception of the depths of depravity to which a pervairted sense of humor will carry certain unregenerate auld hellions of my acquaintance."

Noreen laughed. "But I have very good reasons for wishing to go. In fact, I had already arranged to go. If we took a chaperon your reputation would be safe."

The human terrier regarded her with sudden apprehension, shading into deep suspicion.

"What's this?" he demanded. "Answer me, young woman, an' if ye lie, I can tell it by yer eyes: Do ye by any chance know a red-faced, pot-bellied, auld wastrel named William McDougal? Or a long, lantern-jawed, leather-faced gallows bird of a senator named Edward O'Connor that's a disgrace to any legislative body? Or maybe a little, bewhiskered, sawed-off homunculus of a loggin' thief named Andrew McLaren who isna fit for decent society an' stole every dollar of the million or so he has in hoardin'? Do ye know any of these? Answer me truly, an' ye'll not lose by it."

"Not personally," Noreen laughed. "Of course I know some of them by reputation. Are they friends of yours?"

"Friends! Reputation!" the terrier ejaculated. "Whited sepulchers, every one! They ca' themselves ma friends—an' not one of them but would write ye a check in four figures for a hint of a way to hold me up to ridicule or besmirch my good name wi' scandal."

"I'll bear that hint in mind."

"Na', na', lassie," the old lumberman exclaimed.

"Forget all about it—unless one of them should come to ye wi' the base suggestion of puttin' something over on me. An' then tak' his money an' come to me an' I'll double it. Ye need ha' no compunction in double crossin' these sons o' Belial."

"I'll be true to my salt," Noreen assured him. "But I'm serious about going. As to the chaperon, the one I had in mind is a gentleman."

"A gentleman!" the terrier cried. "An' when in God's name was a gentleman ever fitted to be a chaperon?"

"But you know him. Mr. Caldwell, manager of the Northern Trust Company."

"Caldwell!" Grant exclaimed in horror. "Lassie, he's a friend o' the men I named."

"This has nothing to do with them. He was going out to inspect the property and I was going with him. We intended to go before, but he was detained. Now he writes me that he is ready. Can't you go with us, or can't I go with you?"

"It's beginnin' to strike me," said Grant, "that ye ken mair about Ogilvie & Foss' affairs than ye have told me."

"But now I'll tell you all I do know," said Noreen.

When she had done so the terrier thrust a paw into his beard and scratched a hidden jaw.

"Weel, weel!" he said. "Ye're a close-mouthed young woman. An' so yer father was Dan Maguire. The Big Rust! I knew him years agone. Aye, his judgment would be sound. He had an eye for timber an' water. An' ye've never told anybody?"

"Mr. Caldwell knew, of course, and now you know. Nobody else."

The terrier chuckled. "I'm thinkin' there's a surprise in store for one young man," he said. "We'll go out wi' Peter Caldwell. Under the circumstances he stands financially *in loco parentis,* an' so my reputation will be safe."

CHAPTER XXXIV

A MAN HUNT

WHEN Ogilvie and Foss awoke in the morning following the escape of George, they found that much of their ill humor had evaporated.

"He can't hole up," said Ogilvie, "because he can't have much grub. He has to get somewhere, and he'll be afraid to come back to the road. The chances are he'll lose himself."

"It's hard enough to find a lost man who *wants* to be found," Foss observed. "Laframboise is as handy in the woods as any man I've ever seen, and he says he can't begin to track a man in the bush unless the ground is soft or there's new grass or something. All we can do is to ram around be-guess and be-gum."

"Then we'll do it," said Ogilvie. "I'm going to get him if I have to comb these woods till I know how many ticks each rabbit has to his ears."

"Of course I'm with you," said Foss. "If that infernal fool, McCann—— Archie, I'm darned if I know how he *could* have taken me for George!"

"I don't think he did."

"Well, what the devil——"

Ogilvie gave his partner a short résumé of Flynn's history and told him his suspicions. "I'm half sorry I brought him along, now," he admitted, "but I wanted him where I could see him. I didn't want to leave him around the camp. I thought if we caught George, and he saw Flynn with us, he might think he had been double crossed, and start talking, and that's what we want him for as much as anything. We want to find out who's at the bottom of this thing."

"Not much doubt about that."

"No. But we can't prove it, so far."

"What'll you do with Flynn now?"

"Nothing. He'll go with us. We'll keep pretty close tabs on him, but for the love of Mike don't let him suspect that you know who he is. He'd jump."

They sent one man on to Frenchman's Bay to arrange for the arrest of the fugitive should he show himself there. Then they began to comb the bush. The area of wilderness extended for a hundred miles. They had absolutely no idea of the direction the wanted man would take,

But a dozen men, all woodsmen, can cover a great deal of ground. One of the peculiarities of a man lost in bush is that he rarely goes far in any one direction. Assuming George to have left the road, the probabilities were that he had got turned around in a few hours. On the other hand, if he stayed near the road, the result would be much the same. They divided into parties of threes, making for a common objective point by different routes, and they quartered the ground like dogs working a field of weeds for a possible covey.

It was Laframboise, the keen-eyed, who came on the first trace of the fugitive two days later. It was the remains of a camp fire, and beside it were the remains of a rabbit.

"He's roast dat rab-bit on de stick," Laframboise reported. "He's hongry, lak one wolf. From dat camp his trail go out nordeast. I follow dat for a while, an' I lose him."

But later a party consisting of McGillivray, Archer, and Platt reported the remains of a fire which by their account must have been near the other.

"Maybe the same one," Ogilvie suggested.

"Dat fire w'at I fin'," said Laframboise, "she's by leetle crick wit' jackpine flat behin' her. She's build in leetle hollow, wit' beeg, dead stub 'bout fifty yards off, an' beeg, white rock 'longside."

"Not the same," said Davy Platt. "Ours was built by the butt of a windfall, blowed down roots up. And that's maybe three miles the other side of a little lake about two acres big, with a creek runnin' southeast out of it."

"Ba'gosh, dat's de creek dat fire's on," Laframboise exclaimed. "Dat man, she's los'! She's travel on de circ', roun' an' roun'. Now we catch heem for sure."

When they worked down toward Lebret, Foss became uneasy.

"Now he'll find himself, damn him!" he said. "He'll know the creek because it's the only big one, and he'll know all he has to do is to follow it."

In mid-afternoon they were a short distance from the creek, in the neighborhood of a series of rapids known as "The Smokies." As they approached, they could hear the growl and rumble of the water.

They worked down in the direction of the sound, not widely separated, but out of sight of each other. As usual Flynn was the center man. Ogilvie was somewhere to his right, downstream, Foss was to his left. Flynn had seen neither of them for perhaps half an hour. The riverman slouched along through the brush carelessly, paying little attention to his surroundings. Yet from force of habit he moved quietly, avoiding obstacles automatically. Of late he had been growing suspicious of the more or less constant presence of either Ogilvie or Foss. Now he decided that he was ahead of them half a mile or more. Near the creek he parted the bushes, coming upon a little sun-warmed glade. There, asleep on the grass before him, was the fugitive.

The man was sleeping soundly. His clothes were torn by the brush, his heavy frame had become gaunt, his cheeks beneath a blacking-brush stubble of a beard were sunken. Flynn looked around, listened. He heard nothing. He stepped forward and touched the sleeper. The Greek stirred, opened

his eyes. Then, with a startled cry he was on his feet with a bound.

"Keep quiet!" said the riverman. "They're huntin' ye."

"You 'ave betray me!" the Greek cried.

"Keep down yer voice, ye bughouse fool!" the riverman warned him. "Who pulled Foss off of ye that night down on the road? Listen, now: Foss is to wan side of me an' Ogilvie is to the other. I dunno where the rest is, but they're all spread out, an' comin'. Crawl into the thickest brush ye can find, an' lie there, an' not a peep out of ye! Then, when the coast is clear, folly the creek——"

As he spoke, Foss entered the glade from the upstream side. The riverman's words died on his lips. He sprang upon the Greek.

"Run!" he whispered. "Trip me up an' run!" And then: "I've got him!" he shouted to Foss. "I've got him! Come on——"

It is possible that the Greek did not comprehend, that he attributed a double treachery to the riverman. As he was grappled with apparent earnest intent he drew a knife from a sheath at his waistband and drove it into Flynn's breast, wrenched himself free, and ran.

For a moment the riverman stood as if dazed by the steel which rent his tissues. He looked down at his breast, put his fingers to it. Then with a curse he leaped after the Greek. Half a dozen springs he made, apparently with full power and agility. Then he faltered, staggered, and fell. Over him, paying no heed to him, Foss bounded in pursuit, crashing through the brush as he left the glade like a running moose, whooping for Ogilvie.

Ogilvie heard his partner's shouts and ran for them. But he misjudged their direction. He came out on a flat on the creek just below the head of the rapids. Down the flat toward him came George, with Foss behind. Ogilvie ran to cut him off. As their courses converged he could see that the fugi-

tive held a knife in his hand. He himself was carrying a light ax, not one of the fake affairs, folding or otherwise, carried by amateur woodsmen, but a real tool with a thirty-two-inch helve. He had no other weapon, but with this he was willing to meet any man with a knife.

But just then George altered his course. In the middle of the narrow stream a few rocks forming a tiny island in low water now upthrust their tips. Against these a long spruce brought down by the high water had jammed. Other flotage had drifted against it. A brush jam, which shook in the current, almost spanned the stream. Through it and over it the water boiled, threatening to sweep it away at any moment. It hung by the frailest of tenures, but to the fugitive it seemed to offer a way of escape. He reached it, and began to make his way across. Foss would have followed him without hesitation, but Ogilvie caught his arm.

"Don't be a fool, Jack! Take a look at that jam. Think of your wife and kids!"

The reminder had a quieting effect on Foss, white-water dare-devil as he had been. He looked at the swaying trunk, at the boiling current, and shook his head.

"You're right at that, Archie. He's crossing hell at high water."

George was halfway to the rocks on which the treetop rested. His weight submerged the long trunk slightly. Slowly it began to turn, to revolve. George swayed, struggled to keep his footing. The trunk sank slightly, and the boiling water struck his knees. He grasped for a branch, missed it and was swept clear. The tree, parting from the shore, swung out, but the man was in the swift current, swooping down on the rapids torn with hidden rocks. He went under, came up, beating with his hands.

"He can't swim!" Ogilvie exclaimed.

It was beyond their power to help him. He dis-

appeared. Somewhere, downstream, days later his body would appear.

"Pood devil!" said Ogilvie.

"Well—maybe," said Foss. "He hasn't got a chance, and we'll let him go. Come on back here, Archie. Last thing he did was to knife Flynn."

CHAPTER XXXV

THE TRUTH ABOUT KITTY

THEY found Flynn endeavoring to stanch the blood from his wound. His face was ghastly, but his nerve unshaken.

"Did ye catch him?" he asked. When he was told he shook his head. "I'm thinkin' he's handed me mine."

"I hope not, Flynn," said Ogilvie. The wounded man stared at him.

"So ye know me name!"

"I've known it all along." Ogilvie told him how. The riverman's face twisted in a grin.

"I won't be livin' to be jailed," he said.

"I never intended that you should be jailed," said Ogilvie. "It may not be as bad as you think. We'll get you to the road and in to a doctor."

"Small use," said Flynn. "Before ye can do that it's a gravedigger ye'll be needin'. An' ye need not bother wid graveyards or the likes. Just plant me by the river, beside runnin' water. I've lived by it all me life, an' by all I hear there is damned little of it where I'll be goin'."

Hard case as Flynn was, bad actor as he had been all his life, there was no doubt of his gameness; nor was there much doubt that he had got his finish. They improvised a stretcher with poles and Mackinaws, and others of the rivermen appearing, relayed it toward the tote road as fast as possible.

"And if we get him much farther we'll be lucky," said Foss. "He'll never live to see a doctor."

"I'm afraid not. And there's some information I want from him. Not about Carscallen. It's private, or I'd tell you."

"Try to find out about Carscallen," said Foss. "If we can hang anything on him it may save our bacon."

Eventually, late in the afternoon, they came out on the tote road and set down their burden for a moment. Foss shook his head.

"He's about all in, Archie. If you want to say anything to him you'd better do it now."

But at that moment there was an interruption, the sound of wagon axles clanking in the boxings. Around a turn of the road came a light wagon with four occupants.

"Miss Maguire!" Foss exclaimed. "And—no—yes, by the holy, it's old Aleck Grant, Carscallen's partner. I don't know the fellow sitting by the driver."

"I do," said Ogilvie. "That's Caldwell."

"What do you suppose they're after?"

"A case of the body and the vultures," said Ogilvie grimly. "We're the corpse. That's easy."

But the wagon halted beside them, and Noreen sprang lightly over the wheel to the ground without waiting for her slower companions.

"Archie! What has happened?"

"A number of things." He drew her a few paces aside. "One in particular. I've got Flynn for you."

"Flynn!" she exclaimed. He nodded toward the stretcher.

"He's dying. Our dam was blown up and——"

"Oh!" she cried sharply.

"Blown to glory. Tell you about it later. You'd better talk to Flynn now. You haven't much time."

As they approached the stretcher Ogilvie motioned the men back and turned away himself.

"Don't go, Archie," she said. "I want you with me."

Noreen knelt beside the dying riverman. His eyes were closed, his face ghastly, his breathing irregular. Plainly the sands were running low. The sloping sun cast long shadows down the tote road. On a tree overhead a whitethroat called musically.

One of the horses stamped, shook himself in his harness. The rivermen, grouped to one side, conversed in low tones. Even in the open, with the life of spring, the blue sky, the westering sun, they felt the shadow of the dark wings.

Flynn's eyes opened. He stared at the tops of the trees a-spray with swelling buds outlined against the blue. Then they shifted to the face of the girl. They took on an expression of bewildered surprise.

"Do you know me?" she asked. He inclined his head.

"Ye look like the girl in Carscallen's office. But this is the woods."

"Do you know who I am?"

"Yer name? Ye telled me it, but——"

"I am Noreen Maguire—Kitty's sister."

Amazement spread across his face.

"Th' red-headed kid sister—Kitty's sister! How come ye here?" His voice took on a momentary strength. He turned slightly. The exertion brought a groan. He saw Ogilvie, and the ghost of his old grin curved his lips. "Th' red-headed kids!" he said. "Th' two of yez! Just as ye come years agone bringin' me word th' Big Rust wanted to see me about Kitty!"

"I want you to tell me about Kitty."

"It's you can tell me. She'd go back to ye when she quit me."

"She didn't come back to us. We never even heard from her. She died among strangers."

Flynn was silent for a long moment.

"That's bad," he said. "I did not know that. Belike I am to blame. I did not do right by her, maybe."

"Do you mean that you—did not marry her?" She awaited his reply tensely.

"No, not that," he said. "I married her proper enough, but not under me own name. I was callin' meself Gorman them days an' working out of th' Calumet. I made her give a wrong maiden name—

I forget what—for th' same reason I had to change mine. But I was a fool for gettin' married at all, an' she was one to marry a man like me. She quit me, an' I'm not blamin' her. I did not do right by the girl. But 'tis too late now."

"Yes, too late," said Noreen. "But didn't you ever think about her child?"

"Child?" Flynn gasped. "They was no child when she quit me, nor did I know they was one comin'. She never told me!"

She told him of little Kitty, and his grim face softened.

"To think of that!" he said. "If I had knowed, it might have made a differ'—they's no tellin'. I am no man to take care of a child, but I would have looked after the keep of it. I would have liked to see me own—once." He shook his head regretfully. His gaze again sought the treetops and the soft blue of the sky. "I'm dyin'," he said, as one stating a simple fact. "It seems funny," he added in puzzlement.

"Is there anything we can do for you?" Ogilvie asked. "Anything you want done, any word you want to send?"

"Nothing, and no word. I've nothing to leave—worse luck."

"Would you like me to—to pray?" Noreen suggested. "I don't know—I never did—like this—but I'd try."

The riverman looked at her for a moment and his mouth twisted again in the old, sardonic smile.

"What do ye think would be the use?" he asked.

"I don't know," Noreen admitted. "I just thought—perhaps—it might help you."

"To die, do ye mean? Or afterward?"

"To—to die!"

"I'm needin' no help," said Jim Flynn, "though 'tis kind of ye. I am not afeard to die. An' for what's after—if they's annything—I'll take me medicine." A change came over his face. His eyes

opened wide, closed and opened again. His lips moved feebly. Noreen bent to catch his words. "Don't tell the little wan the worst about me," he whispered feebly. "Say a prayer if ye like. But ye can't fool God—about—Jim Flynn!"

And so the untamed spirit of Jim Flynn went to its own place, and the long shadows of the tote road fell across the clay of its earthly dwelling. With the blanket-wrapped body in the wagon they took the road to the camp. Noreen walked beside Ogilvie.

"So that's over," he said. "I'm glad you got here in time." She nodded soberly.

"I'm glad to know the truth—for Kitty's sake. He was a hard man, Archie, but I think he was sorry, at the last."

"When it was too late—like most of us."

"I suppose so. Well—that's finished. Now tell me about your dam."

He did so.

"There's a bare chance of repairing it and running the logs this year," he concluded, "but we shan't be able to do it in time to meet our liabilities. That means Carscallen's got us."

"Something got Carscallen," she said, and told him of Grant's sudden return and its outcome.

"I'm glad Carscallen slipped up," he said, "but it doesn't help us. It merely puts Grant in his place. It freezes us out just the same."

"I don't think he'll freeze you out."

"Did he ever say he wouldn't?"

"No," she admitted; "he refused to make any promise at all."

"You mean you asked him?"

"Yes, I did."

"That was good of you. I've heard he's a cold-blooded proposition. All right. We won't squeal. He's come out to see what the stock is worth, and we'll show him. I suppose Caldwell came out to see about his mortgage security, but with Grant

taking hold he needn't worry. I'm glad they happened to bring you. You're a bright spot in the general gloom."

It was dusk when they arrived at the camp, but they could see that across the break in the dam there was a skeleton structure, the framework of Foss' jury rig.

"Asseltine's done well," Foss reported to his partner when they found themselves alone that night. "He's got the piling down and some of the back logs and mudsills in. He's been handicapped for men, too. To-morrow we'll make things hum. The water is holding up pretty well in the creeks. We may be able to run our logs yet."

"Not in time to meet our liabilities. I guess we're just proving the proposition for old Grant."

"Maybe," Foss admitted. "I told him we couldn't pay a dollar unless we got the logs out on time, and we couldn't do that. He just grinned like a blasted old wolverine."

"Sounds hopeful," said Ogilvie grimly. "Well, all we can do is to work ahead."

They worked ahead, finding that the additional men made a huge difference. The big timbers were cut, fitted, and bolted into place until the framework was completed. Then the crew began to roll up the log facing.

Noreen haunted the dam from early morning until the crew knocked off at night. It was a joy to her once more to see rivermen at work, to see timber handled by experts. The men, working often waist-deep in icy water, were not unmindful of the red-haired girl watching them. Foss, lending a powerful hand with the work, observed and grinned to himself. Presently he climbed up on the dam beside her.

"I think I'll put you on the pay roll as a walking boss," he said. "Every young fellow thinks you're watching him and nobody else, and they're all working like blazes."

"Yes," she laughed, "I've smiled at every one whose eye I could catch."

"For the Lord's sake!" Foss ejaculated. "Take care you don't start something. Joe Leduc's got eight kids and a wife that weighs two hundred and fifty, and he's a Mormon at heart."

"I'll be careful," she laughed. "I want to help a little, and this is the only way I could think of."

In three days of incessant work the makeshift structure grew to respectable proportions. The water began to rise, pouring in an increasing torrent through the spillway. Though the log facing was by no means water-tight, it would serve if the structure itself would hold. The creeks were past their flood, but still delivering a steady flow.

One evening they closed the spillway and awaited results. After darkness had fallen the night became alive with low sounds, little, chuckling gurgles and splashes, little rubbing noises.

"The logs are afloat!" Noreen exclaimed, as she stood with Ogilvie and Foss at the door listening.

"Sure as shooting!" Foss nodded. "Now if that rig will only hold!"

It held. In the morning Joe Laframboise with a triumphant yell leaped on the end of a floating log, driving it a dozen feet from shore with the momentum of his spring. Immediately he began to "birl" it, till it revolved beneath his twinkling feet in a foaming swirl of water. The slap and patter of his "corked" boots echoed from across the pond. He leaped high, alighting again squarely on the whirling log, and with powerful stamps of reversal brought his steed to a standstill.

"Hooray for hooraw!" he whooped. "Now, by cripes, for sure we drive dat reever!"

"Sluicing, boys!" Foss shouted. "Shoot 'em through!"

CHAPTER XXXVI

ROMANCE ON A LOG

NOREEN went down to join Ogilvie who stood bossing the beginning of the sluicing.

"I knew you'd make it," she said. "You've proved your proposition, Archie."

"We've probably proved it for the other fellow," he said. "Look up there. See your respected employer, with Caldwell. They both know as well as I do that we can't raise money in time on these logs."

Since his arrival at the camp old Aleck Grant had maintained as to his affairs and intentions that silence which is supposed to be the peculiar property of the damned.

He had spent his time prowling back in the timber and along the creeks. The dam and its repairs did not seem to interest him. Now, in company with Caldwell, he squatted upon a knoll, a sinister clay pipe in his mouth, his shaggy eyebrows drawn against the glare of the sun, viewing operations with the lively interest of a Sphinx.

"Mr. Grant told me he was going out to-morrow," said Noreen, idly stirring a piece of bark with her toe.

"Then I guess that settles it," said Ogilvie. "When we get out we'll find that he's paid the note and that the bank has turned over all its collateral. Then he'll make us a cutthroat proposition, and we'll accept it because we can't do anything else."

"His proposition may not be so bad," she suggested. "He's not Carscallen."

"Well, no," Ogilvie admitted, "but he comes from a country where the children of Israel couldn't stand

the competition. Of course, you'll be going out with him."

"Must. I couldn't stay here alone."

"If you'd had any resourcefulness you'd have brought Mrs. Tarbox."

"Well, I wish I had. I hate to go. I love it all—the water and the logs and the work. I'll be sorry to leave them."

"How about me?"

"And you and Jack Foss and Mike Callahan."

"Thanks for the bracket. When I get down I'll look forward to seeing you and Mrs. Tarbox."

"I'll tell her you are looking forward to having breakfast with her."

Ogilvie grinned. "Her breakfasts are something to look forward to. I'll be along one of these days. And—Noreen——"

"Yes," she said as he paused.

"For a while I thought you were—well, I believed you thought something of Carscallen. I was wrong, wasn't I?"

"Entirely wrong."

"Yes, I know I was now. I'm afraid I behaved rather badly. I was—well, I thought a good deal of you myself."

"Did you?" she said, her eyes on the interesting piece of bark at her feet.

"Did and do," he told her. "I'd have told you before, if I'd thought it was any use. And I know it's a rotten time to tell you now, when the chances are that I'm worse than dead broke."

She glanced up at him for a moment and dropped her eyes.

"The time isn't so bad," she said softly. "But, Archie, it's a perfectly rotten place."

He stared at her, his eyes lighting. Then he took a swift step forward. With equal swiftness she retreated.

"No, no!" she forbade him. "Not now, not here, Archie! Haven't you any sense of propriety?"

"None at all. Hang the crew. Let them look and be——"

"Hush! And there's Mr. Grant. Be calm, Mr. Ogilvie!"

"Calm!" Ogilvie uttered helplessly. "Oh, yes, calm. C-a-l-m, calm. Freedom from agitation; quiet; repose; peace. A state of mind ordinarily produced by love for a red-headed girl. Uh-huh! Yes. Calm. Blazes!"

"But you must. Whatever made you select a place like this?"

"I didn't. It selected itself. Let's go and see how the logs are running."

"No. Sit down here on this log and think how happy you are."

"If you devil me any more——"

"Well, I won't. *Do* sit down."

He sat down beside her and tapped his forehead gently.

"I may be crazy after all," he said reflectively. "The last thing, I really remember is trying to point out that I loved you hopelessly."

"Were you just telling a hard-luck story?"

"More than that. But I thought it was true."

"Now that it isn't—part of it, anyway—what are you going to do about it?"

"Depends a good deal on you. You know my financial position. I haven't much to offer you."

"Offer me! Are you men all alike?" she demanded. "Do you all enumerate what you have or haven't to offer a girl in material things?"

"Alike?" he queried. "I think I understand. Carscallen asked you to marry him, did he? That was how he put it—what he had to offer a wife? And you turned him down."

"I had to. Don't you understand, Archie, it isn't what a man has—in most cases—though I wasn't sure of that once. I'm not a very expensive luxury; I wasn't brought up under glass. If you're not afraid, I'm not."

"Then we'll be married as soon as I get through with these logs. Afraid? Lord, no, not for myself. I was thinking of you." He looked up to where Grant and Caldwell were engaged in conversation, and grinned. "I'd like to know what those two old ground hogs are talking about. I'll bet they think they are settling our affairs."

If he could have heard the two old ground hogs he would have been confirmed in this impression.

"To think," Grant was saying, "that I turned this loggin' proposition down mysel', for lack of proper investigation an' by dependin' on the reports of cruisers who couldna see beyond their noses. Aweel, half a loaf's better than none. I'll protect yon stock, an' tak' what Providence has been pleased to gie me."

"You'll pay the whole note and take the stock as arranged. You don't want us to help at all?"

"I'll look after it mysel'." He sighed regretfully. "I've no doubt my conscience will reproach me for it, but I'll do it."

"I don't think your conscience will trouble you much."

"Ye'll no ken the exactin' nature of a Scottish conscience," Grant returned with a grim chuckle.

"Well, you'd better tell the young men and put them out of their misery," Caldwell suggested. Grant chuckled again.

"I'll lay down the law to them to-night. Look yonder, Caldwell. Isna Ogilvie sittin' closer to my secretary than is necessary in the loggin' business? It's in my mind that I'll need to be castin' about for another yin."

"Likely enough," said Caldwell, who had drawn certain conclusions of his own. "They've known each other for a long time."

"They'll no' know each other at all till they've been married mebbe two years," the old lumberman observed cynically, and sighed. "Damn ye, Peter Caldwell, 'tis a great thing to be young," he said.

"Aha! there's Foss, an' he'll put the twa birdies off the one perch."

Foss did, effectively. He appeared so unexpectedly that the "twa birdies" did a fatal and unnecessary thing. They started and moved apart, slightly but sufficiently. Foss grinned.

"As you were!" he commanded. "Sit at—ease!"

"Go to blazes!" said Ogilvie.

"Please, Mr. Foss, we weren't doing anything!" said Noreen plaintively.

"Then you ought to get your time," Foss returned. "Why aren't you?"

"If you want to know," Ogilvie retorted, "it's because this darn log is exposed to the naked and vulgar eyes of roughneck loggers."

"Do you mean it?" Foss exclaimed. "This is great. Not that I'm falling dead with surprise. Millie's been predicting this for months."

"It's not my fault," said Noreen. "I've encouraged him as much as I could."

"And then you pick out this log!" Ogilvie growled. "It isn't fair. It isn't even ladylike."

"There are other logs," Foss grinned, "hundreds of 'em. Somebody ought to be down by Number One dam to boss the sluicing, and I've got my hands full here."

"I haven't," said Ogilvie regretfully.

"Well, go down and fill 'em," said Foss, grinning at the blushing Noreen. "Maybe Miss Maguire can help you."

"He's boss in the woods," said Ogilvie.

"Is he?" said Noreen. "Well, then, I suppose——"

All day the sluicing went forward smoothly, without a hitch. Steadily the remaining dumps at the pond were broken out, and steadily a stream of logs departed on their last long journey. Noreen and Ogilvie ate lunch with the river crew far down

toward Lebret, and returned to camp at night hungry and happy.

After supper they stood watching the last lights in the sky. To them came Foss, his face serious.

"Grant wants to see us, Archie. He says he's going out to-morrow. I guess it's a show-down. We'll know now where we get off."

"I'll wait here," said Noreen.

"He wants you, too."

"But he said——" She broke off. "Oh, well, I suppose I have to."

Old Aleck Grant was enthroned in a wooden chair in the small building which had been the office. His clay pipe was between his teeth. His eyes gleamed beneath his shaggy brows. He resembled a dog which, having secured a bone, is determined to hold it against all comers. Caldwell had an air of detachment.

"Sit ye down," said Grant, "and let's come to an understandin' concernin' our relations. Ye'll understand that I'm standin' in Carscallen's shoes, he havin' made ower to me the stock he held in this concairn. That's clear?"

"Quite clear," said Ogilvie.

"Verra weel," Grant went on. "Ye'll understand, too, that Carscallen used his firm's money in private speculation, an' that he gambled with money which was mine—an' lost. Therefore, if I can mak' a profit out of any of his transactions it's fairly mine."

"As between you and him—yes," said Ogilvie.

"As between me and anybody," the old lumberman asserted. "I'm concairned merely with the situation as I find it. I'm in the preceese poseetion of an innocent holder for value of a negotiable instrument, an' I'm no' concairned an' no' bound by equities wi' which I have nothing to do."

"You state your position clearly enough," said Ogilvie grimly.

"Weel, that bein' so, I find mysel' the owner of certain shares which are pledged as collateral to a

note, the clear agreement bein' that if any party to the note makes default in payment the shares he has put up as collateral become the absolute property of the person makin' payments. Ye'll no' deny that?"

"No, that is correct."

"Are ye prepared to pay yer proportions of that note?"

Foss shook his head. "Not at maturity. You know why."

"It doesna matter why. Ye'll bear in mind that I have nothing to do wi' Carscallen's rascalities, an' it is nothing to me whether or no he is responsible for yer default. I tak' things as I find them, an' my conscience is clear."

Foss turned a dark red. "You have a damned fine conscience," he said. "Like a man that finds a full wallet and won't look at the ad columns for six months."

A sound resembling a smothered laugh came from Noreen. Her employer glared at her. Ogilvie intervened.

"Very well, Mr. Grant," he said, "we'll just pass up questions of conscience. You get a fine timber property for next to nothing, and that's all that need be said. We'll handle the logs till the day the note matures. Then we'll quit. Have somebody else ready to take the drive."

"Ye would not work for me?" the terrier suggested.

"No," said Ogilvie, "and you didn't think we would."

"Heh, heh, heh!" the terrier yelped in unholy mirth. "I'm bettin' ye'll be glad to be workin' for me inside a year."

"Are you?" said Ogilvie softly. "Well, Mr. Grant, with apologies to Miss Maguire, I'd see not only you but myself in perdition first. And if you were a younger man you'd find rubbing it in, as you are doing, a lively amusement."

"Mebbe," the terrier grinned, "but I'm no' a young man. Now, I was prepared to pay yon note, acquire yer stock, an' stand upon my legal rights. But verra unfortunately I find that arrangements have been made to pay your shares, an' even to pay the whole note on yer behalf if necessary."

"To pay our shares!" Ogilvie exclaimed. "We made no such arrangements. We were unable to."

"A' the same they were made, an' I'm defrauded o' my just rights an' choused out o' my profits," the terrier lamented. He pointed to Caldwell with his pipestem. "Ask him."

"The fact is," said Caldwell, "that arrangements were made with us to pay your proportions of the note, and Carscallen's, too, if necessary. In other words, we were to take over the loan which the bank had made you, and give you any reasonable extension you might desire."

"But who made this arrangement?" Ogilvie asked, astounded.

"Aye," the terrier grinned, "who came between auld Aleck Grant, the Shylock o' the Shanties, an' his poun' o' flesh?"

"Well," Caldwell smiled, "that was supposed to be confidential. There were reasons why our client desired her name——"

"*Her* name!" Ogilvie exclaimed.

"Damn ye, Peter Caldwell, ye've spilled the beans!" the terrier barked. "Didna she tell us both——"

"Oh, tell them, Mr. Caldwell, and get it over," said Noreen. "It doesn't matter—now!"

"I'm glad of that," said Caldwell, with a meaning smile. "The fact is, Miss Maguire's father was the original purchaser of this timber, and we are her trustees. I had no idea that you were known to her until she consulted me about this jug-handled arrangement you made with Carscallen. We suspected faulty construction of the dam, but, of

course, could not foretell what did happen. As to the note, I may say——"

"Never mind that," said Noreen.

"Oh, I must tell them about that. We could not have advanced money on the security of the stock, which naturally had no more nominal value than the property, which was already mortgaged to us for the purchase price. Miss Maguire finally persuaded us to accept an agreement by which she pledged her interest in the trust as security for any advances we might make you, and pledged me to secrecy. I suppose"—Caldwell smiled knowingly—"I suppose she had her reasons for that. And that is all I can tell you."

"But I'll tell ye something mair," said Aleck Grant. "I kenned Dan Maguire, the Big Rust as they ca'ed him, an' when I found his daughter had an interest in this timber an' in one of its operators——"

"Please, Mr. Grant!"

"Oh, aye, I'm no' blind yet!" the terrier chuckled. "I made up my mind to investigate the young men as well as the timber, an' I'm thinkin' both are sound business proposeetions. Ye'll mind I was willin' to bet ye'd be workin' for me inside a year. I'm an auld man, an' I've done my share of work. I ken there's auld men willin' to die in harness, but if I have my way I'll e'en die in pasture. Beyond occasional superveesion I'm through wi' business. An' so I'm makin' ye a proposeetion: If the two of ye will come in wi' me I'll mak' ye leeberal tairms. Value yer enterprise here as a success—which it is—an' I'll value mine, an' we'll combine them accordin'. Think it over at yer leisure. An' now"—he winked at Caldwell and Foss—"I hae a wee somethin' in my grip that's mair or less appropriate to most occasions. Come wi' me."

Noreen and Ogilvie, left alone, looked at each other.

"We don't seem appropriate to that occasion," she said demurely.

"I don't need Scotch," said Ogilvie. "I need air. Come outside."

Outside they came on Mr. Callahan smoking a reflective pipe. When he recognized them he turned his back and became absorbed in a tactful contemplation of the firmament.

"Good night, Mike!" said Noreen. "It's a fine night."

"God save ye kindly," said Mr. Callahan. "'Tis so. The moon's worth observin'."

They went on, pursued by an audible chuckle.

"Hang his impudence!" said Ogilvie.

"I like it, bless him. I remember him when I was a little girl. You're not angry with me, Archie, for—for butting in?"

"Angry with you? Lord!" he said. "But why didn't you tell me of your connection with this timber?"

"I don't know—at first. And later I couldn't. You wouldn't have accepted assistance from me. And if you had, you wouldn't have asked me to marry you."

"Perhaps not," he admitted.

"I know you wouldn't. So, you see, it was best."

"I hope you'll always think so," he said seriously.

They stood on a little knoll overlooking the logging pond. A few yards away freshly turned ground and a wooden cross marked the last resting place of Jim Flynn.

"It seems strange," she said. "He really brought us together when we were boy and girl—established a bond of common interest between us. He brought us—me—unhappiness. I wonder if he knows now that I am—happy."

"Perhaps. We can't tell."

"You'll never know now just what his connection was with Carscallen and your dam."

"I can guess. He may or may not have helped

George. But if we couldn't be stopped here, Carscallen had something in view in connection with the drive, and Flynn was to attend to that. It doesn't matter now." He was silent for a moment. "Anyway," he said, "he was a good riverman."

"That should be his epitaph," she agreed.

They stood in silence, looking across the logging pond, still carpeted with brown logs, at the dark line of the dam and the darker timber beyond. A night bird called from the depths of the bush, a liquid, bell-like note, thrice repeated. Suddenly the silence was broken by the rush of flight. The air above them was filled with hurtling bulks, dark shadows with wide wings. A warning "hronk, hronk!" from the great gander breaking the air trail at the tip of his wedged squadron, a quick response from the ranks, and they were gone, the air whistling to the accelerated thrust of mighty pinions.

"Geese," said Ogilvie, "on their way to the nesting grounds."

"Wise birds!" said Noreen. "They know where they are going, and they fly straight. That's a good example for mankind, Archie."

"We'll have a goose on our coat-of-arms—a goose rampant on a log flotant, beside a dam bustant."

She laughed at the conceit, slipping her arm through his.

"Do you remember the first time I kissed you, Archie, twelve years ago?"

"The last time seems about that."

"Oh, greedy! But you were a frightfully embarrassed boy."

"I had no previous experience of wild——"

"Archie!"

"I mean that was a period of youth and innocence. But I offered to return the salute. You refused it."

"But I was so young then," she said demurely.

"No, no, boy, I want to talk. I've often wondered what made me do it."

"Of course this light is poor," said Ogilvie, "but if you will regard me closely——"

"I'm serious. It's strange that *you* should be that boy."

" 'The Brushwood Boy?' "

"Not as weird as that. We never sailed Kipling's 'Sea of Dreams' together."

"But we've had our daydreams."

"And some of them are coming true. My goodness, boy, it's getting late. I have to make an early start, and you have your work. We must go to camp."

As they began the descent of the hill toward the camp a mist was rising from the surface of the lake.

"Some day," she said gravely, "you and I will be going downhill—the long hill—into the mists."

"Yes," he nodded with equal gravity, "into the mists, to the last camp."

She pressed his arm.

"But together, boy!" she said.

THE END